

SEVEN YEARS

COLLECTION
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS.
VOL. CCCCXCVII.

SEVEN YEARS AND OTHER TALES

BY
JULIA KAVANAGH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

THE BRITISH MUSEUM
NATURAL HISTORY
DEPARTMENT
OF
MINERALOGY
AND
METEOROLOGY
AND
GEOLOGY

COLLECTION

OF

BRITISH ARTISTS

FOR THE

BRITISH MUSEUM

OF

NATURAL HISTORY

IN TWO VOLUMES

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AND OTHER TALES.

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VOL. II.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1859.

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SEVEN YEARS,

AND OTHER TABLES

OF THE

POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

LEIPZIG

HERMANN TACHS

1851

THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

SEVEN YEARS.

VOL. II.

THE LITTLE DANCING-MASTER.

POLYDORE JASMIN was, as he said himself, "a professor of the Terpsichorean art;" in plainer terms, a dancing-master. Being a short-legged, dumpy little man, nature did not seem to have intended him for any extraordinary feats of agility; but an irresistible vocation had enabled him to overcome every physical obstacle. As he was a married man, and the father of seven children, he remained poor, in spite of the almost supernatural industry with which he applied himself to his art both day and night. Instead of owning a handsome and fashionably-situated *salon de danse*, he was allowed to waste his talents in a damp cellar-like room, looking on the yard of a dingy house in the Rue St. Denis, where he daily revealed the mysteries of the light muse to the smart shopmen and pretty *grisettes* of the neighbourhood.

Still, Monsieur Jasmin was a contented, and even a happy man: the lightness and buoyancy of his profession seemed to have passed into his heart. His manners, however, were very grave and dignified; and when he danced, he became so solemn, that his pupils, like the courtiers of the *Grand Monarque* on a similar

occasion, remained struck with awe at the imposing sight. To say the truth, M. Jasmin had a respect for dancing; he looked upon it as a very grave affair, and could not bear to hear it lightly spoken of, or turned into ridicule. If anything could tend to increase M. Jasmin's natural equanimity of temper, it must have been the high opinion he entertained of his art, his own person, and his family. Madame Polydore Jasmin, according to him, possessed the gift of eternal youth; at least he solemnly declared — and he believed it — that she had not altered in the least since the day of their first meeting, when her coal-black eyes, rosy cheeks, and pleasant smile first won his tender heart. Others averred that cares and anxiety had rendered the poor woman pale and thin, and that she was only the shadow of her former self; but of this he saw and knew nothing, and his love for his wife remained unabated. She was a good, simple-hearted woman, well deserving of affection, and entirely devoted to her family: her love and veneration for her husband were unbounded: she entertained, moreover, the deepest respect for dancing, and looked upon M. Jasmin as the high priest of that mysterious art. The children of this worthy couple were like their parents — contented, good-humoured, and simple-hearted: their education was very carefully attended to; for there had not been danced a *pas* in France since the days of Louis XIV. with which they were not thoroughly acquainted.

Amongst the few acquaintances of M. and Madame Jasmin, who were rather shy and reserved, was one of their neighbours, M. Bourreux, a disagreeable, satirical old man, who had no children, was thought to be in easy circumstances, continually talked about making

his will, and seemed privileged to say whatever he pleased, without giving offence to any of the families which he daily visited — teasing the children, annoying the parents, and turning the household arrangements into ridicule, during the whole time of his stay. On a fine summer evening this amiable individual condescended to pay M. Jasmin a visit. To the dancing-master's surprise, he was unusually gracious. The high polish of Madame Jasmin's bees'-waxed floors seemed to transport him with admiration: by an adroit transition he contrived to connect the subject with M. Jasmin's proficiency in his art; and he was so eloquent on both topics, that the heart of the dancing-master's wife swelled with pride, whilst equally gratifying feelings agitated her husband. In his sudden fit of amiability, M. Bourreux even attempted to pat the heads of the children, and say a few kind words, but they all drew away with instinctive mistrust. When his stay had been somewhat prolonged, M. Bourreux rose to depart; but as though suddenly recollecting himself, he turned towards his host, and with a bland smile observed, "My dear Monsieur Jasmin, allow me to congratulate you before I go; I am indeed delighted."

M. Jasmin opened his eyes very wide, and seemed bewildered; his wife looked at him as though for an explanation. M. Bourreux continued: "It is perhaps indiscreet in me to mention this so early; but I really could not command my feelings."

The dancing-master and his wife exchanged glances: "What could this mean?"

"What!" exclaimed the visitor; "can you be unacquainted with an event concerning you so nearly?"

Nay, then, let me have the pleasure —” And without finishing the sentence, he drew a newspaper from his pocket, and handed it with a smile to M. Jasmin. The dancing-master mechanically glanced over the paragraph pointed out by M. Bourreux; but scarcely had he read a few lines, when he became very pale, and sank down on a seat.

“What is the matter, Polydore?” cried the alarmed Madame Jasmin.

“’Tis only the effect of joy,” coolly remarked M. Bourreux; “he will soon come round.”

But instead of coming round, M. Jasmin betrayed increasing emotion; his little grey eyes twinkled with tears; and mournfully shaking his head, he exclaimed in a broken tone, “Poor fellow! I taught him how to dance: is it now come to this?” and with another shake of the head, expressive of the deepest melancholy, he allowed the paper to fall to the ground. Madame Jasmin hastily picked it up, looked over the paragraph which had so affected her husband, and fairly burst into tears, whilst M. Bourreux eyed them both with undisguised contempt. Not to keep the reader in suspense, we will state that the paper so officiously produced by M. Bourreux announced the death of Jacques Jasmin, merchant of New Orleans, where he had died of the yellow fever, on the eve of returning to his native country with a large fortune. As the deceased was a cousin of M. Jasmin, of whom he had not heard for several years, the golden consequences of this event chiefly struck M. Bourreux, who, when he saw the paltry light in which his friends beheld it, began to look upon them as more shallow and foolish beings than he had till then thought them to

be. M. and Madame Jasmin were in the mean while relieving their grief by enumerating, as is usual in such cases, the manifold virtues of the deceased.

"So good-tempered!" exclaimed Madame.

"So willing to learn too!" observed her husband.

"The newspaper says he died immensely rich," urged M. Bourreux.

"He deserved it," warmly cried M. Jasmin. "Poor lad! when he went away, ten years back, to seek his fortune, 'Trust me, cousin Jasmin,' says he, 'I shall make my way; and honestly too,' he added proudly; for he was proud, poor Jacques was."

"Ay, and don't you recollect how, when you slipped the piece of gold into his little trunk, he pressed your hand, and could not speak?" observed Madame Jasmin, wiping her eyes.

"I declare," replied her husband with surprise, "I had forgotten all about that. Well, he was welcome to it; but it was a loan, not a gift; and indeed, if ever his children come to France, I shall remind them, in a polite manner of course, of the debt."

"Your cousin was never married, and has left no children," sharply said M. Bourreux.

"Well, I might have known that," replied M. Jasmin; "for when he was going away, 'Cousin,' says he, 'I shall never marry but a pretty lively French-woman like Madame Jasmin.'" Here the dancing-master tenderly glanced towards his wife, who positively blushed.

"Well, but do you also know," impatiently exclaimed M. Bourreux, "that your cousin has left no will?"

"What about it?" calmly asked M. Jasmin.

"What about it?" almost indignantly echoed his neighbour; "why, if he died childless, and without making a will, does it not follow that his large fortune — two millions of francs, the newspapers say — must be divided amongst his relations?"

M. Jasmin opened and rolled his eyes in a manner which showed that the thought now occurred to him for the first time. For a while he seemed lost in thought, then incredulously exclaimed it could not be; a sentiment in which his wife fully concurred. On hearing this, M. Bourreux became indignant, then satirical, and at last, by a natural transition, quite sentimental. He begged of his dear friends to believe him — what interest had he in deceiving them? The dancing-master and his wife at length allowed themselves to be convinced; and after giving a few more tears to the memory of Jacques, they agreed that the intelligence must be true. M. Bourreux having thus accomplished his errand, departed, leaving them to their own reflections. These were dismal enough; and what with their grief for the death of Jacques Jasmin, and their joy of becoming at once so rich, the worthy couple spent, upon the whole, a rather miserable evening.

By the next morning they were more composed, and had settled how to act. The whole family immediately went into mourning, for what less could be done to honour the memory of a man who left them a fortune? Besides this, M. Jasmin had to write to his Norman cousin, M. Legros, who was the only other heir of the deceased. The next and still more important step, was to remove from their present "low neighbourhood,

to a more convenient residence." So at least said Madame Jasmin, who had a secret taste for grandeur.

"And Monsieur Jasmin's pupils!" objected some prudent neighbours.

Madame Jasmin assumed a remote look, and hinted that her husband had thoughts of giving up teaching. "He thinks it fair to beginners," she said kindly, "and though he may be induced to take a few pupils, it will be more for his own amusement than for profit."

The prudent neighbours withdrew in high dudgeon. "Oh! that was it, was it? the Jasmin's were getting too grand for the Rue St. Denis. Very well, very well, time would show."

But Madame Jasmin was reckless, ambition had invaded her heart, and for once that eager passion held sovereign empire in that hitherto humble region. A fashionable apartment in the Chaussée d'Antin was found and at once taken possession of. A few hundred francs, the careful savings of years, were lavishly spent on the necessary changes of furniture. "The rent was horribly dear," Madame Jasmin confessed, but why deny it? she took secret pleasure in its dearness, — there is a comfort which the simple and ignorant do not suspect in the dearness of things. "It is dear," there is the pity, "but I can actually squander all that money," there is the comfort; the soothing thought.

This fashionable apartment nominally consisted in four rooms, but was really all *salon*, every other convenience being sacrificed to that one room. The kitchen was a square hole, where daylight had never penetrated; the dining-room could hold only about four full-grown persons at a time; and although the salon or drawing-room was handsome and well-proportioned,

it unfortunately happened that the only spot in which the sofa could possibly be put, was precisely against the only door that led into the bed-room. This door, which would otherwise have spoiled the symmetry of the room, was supposed to be there incognito, and was papered over like the rest of the walls, in order to keep up the delusion; but as the bed-room, like the kitchen, had no window, the architect had humanely caused a few panes of glass to be inserted into the highest portion of the door already mentioned; so that, with a little complaisance on the part of visitors, they might be supposed to be out of view altogether.

After a long consultation, M. and Madame Jasmin agreed that the sofa must be put against the door, and that, as the glass panes fortunately opened and shut like a real window, the aperture should serve to introduce them into their sleeping apartment. It is true it was somewhat narrow; but, as M. Jasmin wisely observed, "you had only to step up on the sofa, pass your head through the opening, and you were sure to come down, most probably on the bed, and without being more than slightly grazed at the utmost." Notwithstanding these advantages, the dancing-master and his wife had not been three days in their new apartment before they were sick of it.

"I declare," piteously exclaimed Madame on the third morning, "that I can bear this no longer. To get in and out of a bed-room in that fashion, and a dozen times a day, is enough to exhaust one."

"We shall get accustomed to it in time," was Monsieur Jasmin's comforting reflection. He was a bright-minded little man, and looked at the rosy side of things.

"And I say that I cannot bear it," reiterated the lady with some asperity, and as she felt really fatigued, she sat down on a chair. Monsieur Jasmin looked perplexed.

"What is to be done?" he asked, giving his wife a dubious look.

"I really do not know," she replied, dismally; "my mind and my cookery are alike bewildered with that black kitchen; and if the seven children must be locked up in the dining-room for fear of soiling the drawing-room paper, I really think we might throw them in the Seine at once."

Monsieur Jasmin was too kind and indulgent not to feel more pity than resentment for this little burst of temper.

"My dear," he said, with mild gravity, "it was your suggestion to lock them up."

"Monsieur Jasmin," impatiently interrupted his wife, "are you or are you not a rich man? If you are, let us have a better place to live in than this. If you are not, let us go back to the Rue St. Denis."

"My dear," said Monsieur Jasmin, still mildly, but with a great increase of gravity, "I really do not understand you. I cannot and I will not go back to the Rue St. Denis. The pupils I had there have not chosen to follow me here; it is not my place to return to them. We are virtually separated. With regard to your suggestion of taking a larger apartment I should have much pleasure in acceding to it, but for one or two trifling objections: we are, as you know, rather short of money, and though there can be no doubt that a vast fortune will come in to us with the rapidity

usual in such cases, I need not tell you, my love, that it has not come yet."

Monsieur Jasmin spoke with a solemnity which struck repentance in the gentle breast of Madame Jasmin. Tears started to her eyes, and being an impulsive little woman, she rose and threw her arms around the neck of Polydore, whom she embraced penitently. Monsieur Jasmin had a soft heart, and that dignified composure, which he made a point of preserving, was forsaking him fast, when a violent ring at the bell made the affectionate little couple start rather abruptly.

"There, my dear," said Monsieur Jasmin, with a pleasant smile, "compose yourself, that ring brings good news."

He went and opened.

Before him stood a short thick-set man in a great coat and comforter, and with an enormous carpet bag in his right hand; behind the short man rose a tall and thin lady, who looked strung with parcels and baskets, and behind her again appeared two round, dumpy, burly boys, each carrying a band-box.

Monsieur Jasmin opened his mouth and eyes, and could not speak. He had recognised his Norman cousin, Monsieur Legros; the tall lady must be Madame Legros, and the two boys, Monsieur Legros's two sons; the extent of the forthcoming calamity bewildered him.

"Quite well, thank you," said Monsieur Legros, answering a question Monsieur Jasmin had not put. "Come in, Alexandrine, come in, boys."

And they actually entered the dining-room, reckless of the fearful way in which they filled the place.

Monsieur Legros sat down, took off his hat and

comforter, wiped his forehead, and having informed his wife and sons that they were to make themselves at home, he turned to his cousin Polydore, and winking shrewdly, he laid his forefinger on the side of his nose, and emphatically said, "Well."

"I do not understand," said Jasmin, watching with anguish the proceedings of Madame Legros, who was slowly unstringing her parcels.

"You do not understand!" echoed Monsieur Legros; "why, sir, I mean what news about the business that brings us here?"

"None as yet," answered Monsieur Jasmin.

"None," echoed M. Legros with a frown, and as though he strongly suspected his cousin of having fraudulently abstracted the two millions for his own benefit. "Well, do you know," he continued, with a look meant to be particularly cutting in case M. Jasmin was guilty — "do you know, I think this very strange."

"To say the truth, so do I," ingenuously replied the dancing-master.

M. Legros coughed doubtfully and in a manner to show that, for the present, he would not decide on so grave an affair; but that he would, nevertheless, keep his eye on Jasmin.

"In the mean while," he added, following aloud this train of thought, "let us make ourselves at home. I knew that living in hotels is horribly dear," pursued Monsieur Legros, taking off his great coat, "so I have resolved to give you, cousin Jasmin, a proof of my friendship by boarding and lodging with you."

"We have very little room," feebly began M. Jasmin.

"My dear fellow, do not mention it, no apologies. All will do excellently well; Madame Legros and I can sleep here," said he, rising and looking into the salon, "the two boys will do admirably in your kitchen, wherever it is. A few mattresses, feather beds, sheets, and blankets are all we require. Ah! Madame Jasmin, how do you do?" he blandly added, as that timid lady, who had taken refuge in the kitchen, now appeared with the seven young Jasmins in the rear; "allow me to introduce my wife, Madame Legros. You did not expect that petite surprise," he added, with a knowing wink.

Madame Jasmin confessed faintly that she did not. "Never mind, cousine, it comes all the pleasanter. You are, I have no doubt, an excellent cook; the boys — look up, Adolphe, look up, Auguste — and your children will be friends in no time, and Jasmin, Madame Legros, and I, shall go out sight-seeing, for it is Madame Legros's first visit to the capital."

Madame Jasmin looked at her husband, and Monsieur Jasmin looked at her, and the kind-hearted, simple-minded little couple, unable to frame an ungracious, inhospitable refusal, made the best of a bad bargain, and bade their Norman cousins welcome.

We will not attempt to describe the sufferings M. Jasmin and his family had to endure during the first week of the stay of their relatives. Matters went on, however, as M. Legros had predicted. The unfortunate Madame Jasmin cooked from morning till night; the children agreed or quarrelled as their fancy led them; and whichever they did, always made such a fearful noise, that the lodger who resided underneath offered M. Jasmin a certain sum on condition of his removing

instantly, which, from a sense of dignity, he refused to do. But the worst of it was, that the luckless dancing-master was compelled to show his cousins about, not only over all Paris, but also over every portion of the surrounding country that had ever possessed the least celebrity. M. and Madame Legros were determined to make the best of their stay. As though to increase M. Jasmin's deep mortification, no tidings whatever could be had of Jacques Jasmin's fortune, a circumstance which caused M. Legros to hint, in a dark manner, that he strongly suspected the newspaper paragraph of being entirely groundless, and that he was not even far from considering his cousin as accessory to the fabrication, which had been the means of involving him in travelling expenses — and all in order to gratify M. Jasmin's selfish wish of enjoying the company of himself and his amiable family! M. Jasmin protested such an idea had never even entered his mind; but this of course only increased M. Legros's suspicions. "But look ye, sir," he added in a threatening tone, "it would be better for you never to have made a dupe of me, sir; for I protest I shall leave neither this city nor this house, sir, until I have ascertained the truth of the whole affair."

This was an awful threat, and M. Jasmin felt it in all its force. But the gracious virtue of hospitality had too deep a root in the dancing-master's gentle heart for him to do what nine out of ten people would have done in his stead.

"No, he could not bid his cousin leave his house, and seek himself some other home."

"I am sick of my life with them," exclaimed Madame Jasmin, with a feeble burst of tears.

"My dear, I would do anything to please you," said her husband, tenderly, "but think of our social position; think of my profession!"

The honour of dancing was at stake. Madame Jasmin felt it, and provided herself with a new dose of patience.

And so matters went on. Monsieur Legros became more and more suspicious, Madame Legros dropped haughty hints, the quarrels of the two young Legros' and the seven young Jasmins daily acquired a more bitter and vindictive character, the sight-seeing nearly wore Monsieur Jasmin off his legs, and the feeding of so many people rapidly emptied his pockets, and nothing was heard of Jacques Jasmin and his two millions, save through the medium of Monsieur Bourreux, who dropped in every day to ask "if the millions were coming?" To which Monsieur Jasmin would mildly reply, "not yet," and Monsieur Legros would snarl an angry "no." Monsieur Bourreux at first appeared annoyed and disappointed; but he soon grew reconciled to the circumstance; it even seemed to afford him a peculiar sort of pleasure, as was evident by the chuckle of satisfaction with which he alluded to it. One morning, when the whole family were at breakfast in the drawing-room — the only room which could contain them — M. Bourreux made his appearance at an earlier hour, and with a more agreeable and pleasant look than usual. On being asked to partake of the morning meal, he readily consented; and whilst Madame Jasmin was pouring him out a cup of coffee, cheerfully hummed a merry tune. M. Legros opened the conversation by asking if there were any news.

"Why, yes, there are," answered M. Bourreux, with great liveliness; "and very good news too. What do you think now of your cousin Jacques not being dead?"

"Not dead!" echoed M. Legros, laying down his cup in indignant astonishment; "not dead!"

"Yes; excellent, is it not?" chuckled M. Bourreux, rubbing his hands. "But perhaps you don't believe it? Read this, my dear sir — read this!" and with the utmost complaisance he handed a newspaper to M. Legros. The paragraph to which he drew his attention merely stated that it was with the greatest pleasure the editor announced to the public that the merchant of New Orleans whose demise had been so deeply lamented a few weeks ago was still in the enjoyment of excellent health, the report having originated entirely through a mistake. As M. Legros read this aloud, M. Jasmin had his full benefit of the intelligence. It would be difficult to state exactly what the dancing-master's feelings were: he was rather disappointed at the loss of a fortune; but he was still better pleased to think that Jacques Jasmin was alive, observing aloud, in the simplicity and openness of his heart, that it was a great comfort.

"And do you call that a comfort, sir?" cried M. Legros in a rage. "Do you know, sir," he continued, scowling upon him fearfully, "that these words would lead me to suspect that you have agents in New Orleans by whose means you contrived to spread this report? But no!" he exclaimed, checking himself, "I will not believe it; nor will I believe that Jacques Jasmin is alive: it is a moral impossibility; and as there is no name mentioned in this statement, I am

authorised to believe either that it is utterly false — a scandalous fabrication — or that it does not in any manner relate to my deceased cousin."

"But suppose it is true?" observed M. Bourreux.

"I will suppose no such thing!" exclaimed the irascible M. Legros.

"Well, but it may be true," persisted the other; "and I ask how you would behave in case your cousin Jacques were to come home unexpectedly?"

"Sir," gravely replied M. Legros, "I should consider myself a deeply-injured man, and require a compensation; but admitting that my deceased cousin could come home, which I consider impossible, I should think myself justified in not recognising him, as I have a very faint recollection of his person."

"Ah, but I remember him quite well," here interposed M. Jasmin with a knowing look.

"I would not recognise him on your authority," hastily exclaimed his cousin; "indeed I should consider the whole affair so extremely suspicious, that I would turn my pretended cousin out of doors directly."

"A very prudent course indeed!" observed M. Bourreux with a sneer. "But," continued he, changing the conversation, "I have more news; and an excellent joke they will make too," he shrewdly added. "You must know, neighbour," addressing M. Jasmin, "that your old lodgings are let — you would never guess to whom? Well, not to keep you in suspense — to a dancing-master, who has now all your scholars; so you see you are fairly in for it;" and M. Bourreux chuckled very merrily at the idea.

This was pouring oil on M. Legros's wounded spirit: he laughed very long and very loud; so did his

wife and his two boys. Madame Jasmin made a faint attempt to smile; her husband, seeing that his friends enjoyed the joke so much, thought it must be a capital one, though he could not exactly see where the point of it lay: he therefore laughed as much as he could; but his eyes glistened, and his lips quivered, as he thought of his seven children, and wondered what he should do.

"Well," said M. Bourreux, who had finished his breakfast by this time, "now that I have made you so merry and comfortable, I think I shall go." And away he went with a very satisfied air.

Still, it must be confessed that no particular signs of mirth or comfort were shown by the individuals whom he left behind him. Madame Jasmin had gone into the kitchen to cry: Madame Legros seemed to think that she had been mortally offended by her cousins, for she scarcely deigned to look upon them; her husband, who believed more in the truth of the newspaper paragraph than he chose to confess, was exceedingly snarlish and ill-tempered; M. Jasmin was overwhelmed by the news of the rival dancing-master: a reputation of twenty years' standing had been overthrown in a moment. After an hour's deep meditation, M. Legros rose, and stating that he was going out, asked his wife to accompany him; in a few minutes they walked out, without requesting, as usual, their cousin to come with them. M. Jasmin was not sorry for this; for, to say the truth, he wanted to speak to his wife. When they were alone, the children being all stowed away in the dining-room, he began pouring his sorrows into her faithful bosom, accusing himself of folly, and lamenting his imprudence. Madame Jasmin

consoled him as well as she could: "he had done everything for the best, and everything might yet turn out well." M. Jasmin was easily comforted; he tried to persuade himself matters were not desperate, and that the best thing he could do would be to see about it directly. What "seeing about it" meant, neither he nor his wife exactly knew; but it must have been something pleasant, for it caused them to brighten up immediately. In order to effect this, it was necessary to dress and go out: the first of these operations was not half over when a ring came at the bell. Madame Jasmin ascertained, by peeping through the key-hole, that it was a stranger. The worthy couple were in a terrible dilemma: M. Jasmin could not take refuge in the dining-room, for the nine children were there fighting as usual; neither could he enter the kitchen, lest the grease off some of the plates and saucepans should contaminate his new suit of clothes; it was impossible for him to remain in the *salon*, for there was no other place in which to receive the stranger: in short, M. Jasmin saw that his toilette must be finished in the bed-room. There was no time to lose; so hastily catching up his clothes, he jumped up on the sofa, darted through the window, and alighted safely on the bed. Scarcely was this delicate operation concluded, when the stranger was ushered in by his wife.

"Is Monsieur Jasmin at home?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir," she somewhat hesitatingly replied.

"Could I speak with him?"

"Oh, certainly, in a few minutes," answered Madame Jasmin, wondering how ever her husband was to get out.

"He is a dancing-master, I believe?" continued the

stranger; and on being answered in the affirmative, "Is he usually moderate in his terms?"

Madame Jasmin was going to answer "exceedingly so;" but her husband, who had been extremely fidgetty and nervous since the beginning of the interview, now thought it proper to interfere. Standing on the bed, he therefore thrust his head through the window, and coughed gently. The stranger immediately gave a start, and looked up. "Good morning, sir," affably said M. Jasmin; "I believe you want to speak to me?"

"You are Monsieur Jasmin, then?" observed the stranger, with the greatest gravity.

M. Jasmin bowed.

"And I believe you are a dancing-master?"

"I have that honour," replied M. Jasmin; "but if we are to speak on professional matters, will you allow me —" And by an appropriate gesture he indicated his wish to come out.

"Oh, by all means!" cried the stranger.

Out accordingly in more senses than one the dancing-master did come, performing the awkward feat with truly professional grace and agility; and, as he was now quite dressed, looking very dignified indeed.

The stranger did not even smile; and when M. Jasmin had taken a seat, resumed the conversation as though nothing had occurred. After several inquiries, he suddenly asked, "Did you not formerly reside in the Rue St. Denis?" When M. Jasmin had answered in the affirmative, the stranger dryly observed he thought it was a great pity he had ever left that neighbourhood. This mysterious speech led the dan-

cing-master to conclude that his visitor resided in that quarter himself; and as, from the nature of his questions, he looked upon him in the light of a future pupil, he began to feel nervously alive to the danger of losing him beforehand.

"Ah! sir," said he, sadly shaking his head, "it was indeed a melancholy event that brought me here!" And as though he had known him for years, he began relating to his visitor how he had learned the death of Jacques Jasmin, and had been induced to remove to his present lodgings. "Poor fellow," he added with glistening eyes, "I taught him how to dance! — poor Jacques! But there is yet hope," said he, checking himself; "yes, sir, there is yet hope: cousin Legros says he could not recognise him, but I am sure I should. I have him even now in my mind's eye — a tall, good-looking young man; taller and younger than you, sir, a good bit, with darker hair too, and more colour. Oh, I should know him instantly!"

"Well," said the stranger rather ironically, "if your cousin is alive, what becomes of your fortune?"

"Sir, I will not think of that," manfully replied M. Jasmin; "it is his, not mine. I confess that I shall feel sorry to have ever heard of his death, as this has been the cause of a few disagreeable circumstances; but I shall feel still more pleased, sir, to hear that he is alive. But really there is quite enough of this. I believe you wished to speak to me on professional matters: my terms are very moderate," he added, with an insinuating smile.

The stranger looked embarrassed. "Why, to say the truth" — he began, and then paused hesitatingly.

As M. Jasmin was wondering what this could mean,

the drawing-room door opened, and M. Legros majestically stalked in. Without regarding the presence of the stranger, who, on seeing him, discreetly retired to the other end of the room, he indignantly exclaimed, "Well, sir, I am satisfied now; I know everything. Yes, sir," he fiercely continued, "I have been making inquiries, and have actually learned that Jacques Jasmin, or rather an impostor, taking the name of my deceased and respected relative, has been seen this very morning in the Rue St. Denis inquiring after you!"

"Thank God for it!" fervently exclaimed the dancing-master. "He is then alive and well, and Monsieur Bourreux was right."

"Sir," said his cousin, with a glance of withering contempt, "you are mad, wretchedly insane; if I had my will, you should be sent to Charenton [the Parisian Bedlam]. If you were not so blind and deluded, I could prove to you, as clearly as two and two make four, that Monsieur Bourreux's intelligence was a vile calumny on the character of our late cousin, inasmuch as it accused him of the grossest inconsistency — namely, of being dead at one time, and actually alive again in less than two weeks afterwards! Where is the newspaper?"

Whilst the eye of M. Legros was wandering about the room in search of the paper, it chanced to alight on the stranger, who was looking at him very fixedly. On meeting his glance, M. Legros started back, and even turned pale; but rapidly recovering his presence of mind, he folded his arms upon his breast, and in a tone and attitude of defiance, exclaimed, "Well, sir, what about it? I suppose you are going to say *you*

are Jacques Jasmin, and that I recognise you! You are mistaken, sir; I shall do no such thing: the fact is, I do not recognise you!"

"Jacques!" cried M. Jasmin, sinking down on a chair in the height of his astonishment.

"Oh!" ironically observed M. Legros; "I suppose, sir, *you* recognise him: very good, sir. I have a witness, mind you, who has heard you say you would; so that it is evidently quite premeditated!"

"Jacques! Jacques! can it indeed be you?" exclaimed the dancing-master, without heeding M. Legros.

Jacques Jasmin — for the strange visitor was no other — merely smiled in reply, and warmly shook his relative by the hand. M. Polydore Jasmin, with all his simple-heartedness, was somewhat of a formalist; and though his eyes were filled with tears as he gazed on the altered and sunburnt features of his long-lost cousin, he gravely folded him in his arms, and kissed him on each cheek, according to the old French fashion, which, though wearing away, is still in use among the middle and lower classes, and all the partisans of the old school.

"Very well, gentlemen, very well," indignantly exclaimed M. Legros, as he witnessed these friendly proceedings with very ferocious feelings — "very well, you might have waited to kiss each other until I was gone! I shall soon rid you of my presence; but before I go, you shall hear some of my mind. You, sir," — to Jacques — "I look upon as a swindler, seeking to involve your unhappy relatives in expenses; and you, sir," — to M. Jasmin — "are a mean hypocrite. I have the honour to bid you both good-morning: my innocent family shall no longer undergo the contamina-

tion of this roof." With this M. Legros walked out of the room in a very stately manner. When he stood on the threshold of the apartment, however, he turned back to inflict a last blow. "My dear fellow," said he, smilingly addressing the dancing-master, "I must give you a friendly piece of advice before I go: learn to dance, my dear sir — learn to dance!"

M. Jasmin had heard himself called a mean hypocrite; and being naturally good-tempered, and inclined to make allowances for the blighted hopes of a disappointed heir, he had borne this unjust treatment with the greatest equanimity. But there are limits to endurance; and when M. Legros ventured on making the audacious remark above recorded, M. Jasmin started to his feet in a fit of ungovernable fury, and seized on the object nearest to him, with the firm intention of throwing it at M. Legros's head. Although this object happened to be a large arm-chair, he lifted it up with the greatest ease, and would actually have accomplished his design, but for the interference of Jacques Jasmin, and the precipitate retreat of M. Legros, who rushed down the stairs in a state of great terror, calling out murder all the way, and followed by his screaming wife and children. As soon as M. Jasmin's momentary anger had subsided, he felt very much ashamed at having so committed himself. He would even have run after M. Legros, to apologise for his inhospitable hastiness of temper, but the terrified gentleman was already out of sight. This made M. Jasmin very uncomfortable. The only reflection that alleviated his distress was, that what he had done was merely in defence of his art, and so far excusable. By repeating this a number of times, he confirmed himself in the be-

lief that personal feelings had in no manner influenced his conduct, and that his art alone had been insulted — an impression which Jacques Jasmin carefully refrained from removing. When the dancing-master's mind had recovered its usual equanimity, he hastened to introduce his cousin to his wife, who had rushed in from her post behind the door (where she had been listening till then) on hearing the altercation between M. Legros and her husband. Though not quite so astonished as M. Jasmin had expected her to be, she was nevertheless very hysterical, and might even have fainted away, if the continued whining which proceeded from the dining-room had not recalled her to the necessity of giving the children a good scolding. Jacques Jasmin having, however, interceded for them, they were forgiven, and at his request allowed to enter the drawing-room immediately.

We will not dwell upon the manner in which the day — which, notwithstanding the many disappointments it brought with it, was truly one of happiness — was spent by the family of M. Jasmin, nor on the long account which Jacques had to give of himself. His history was simple enough, and will be easily detailed in a few words. The first of the newspaper paragraphs, which had caused such a series of mistakes, turned out to be false in every respect. Jacques did not possess two millions of francs; he had not much more than one; worse still, he was married — to a Frenchwoman, however — and was the father of several children, so that all chance of inheriting his fortune was at an end; yet, strange to say, M. Polydore Jasmin seemed quite happy on hearing this, and actually rubbed his hands with glee. But the most singular portion of Jacques

Jasmin's history was, that the piece of gold which he had received from his cousin at the epoch of their parting had partly been, he said, the means of making his fortune. This struck M. Jasmin as one of the most extraordinary circumstances he had ever heard, and made so deep an impression on his imagination, that for a long time afterwards he mentioned it to every one he knew as a great natural curiosity; for, he observed, there must have been some virtue in the gold: it could not have happened otherwise; so at least says Madame Jasmin.

As it had never occurred to the simple-minded dancing-master that he had anything to expect from his rich relative, he felt somewhat surprised when, on the second day which followed his first visit, Jacques Jasmin hinted that, as he had been the involuntary means of causing him to remove from his old quarters to a neighbourhood wholly unsuited to his circumstances, he felt it his duty to provide him with new lodgings. M. Jasmin would not at first hear of this; but he at length consented, and in a few days was comfortably settled with his family in a large and airy apartment in a part of the town equally removed from the commercial Rue St. Denis and the fashionable Chaussée d'Antin. Here the dancing-master rapidly found scholars; but as they did not pay him very liberally, he might still have repented leaving the Rue St. Denis, if it had not occurred to Madame Jacques Jasmin, who turned out to be a very pretty and amiable woman, that, as her family was rapidly increasing, it would be a prudent and economical plan to settle a certain annual sum on their cousin, on condition of his engaging to teach his art to their children, with all the

new *pas* that might come out. Her husband, who is partly suspected of having suggested it, immediately submitted this plan to his relative, who, after mature deliberation (for although he said nothing about it, the clause of the new *pas* was to him a great objection), adhered to it, and faithfully performed his part of the agreement, always being in mortal fear lest some new *pas* should come out without his knowledge, and render him guilty of what in his eyes would have been direct perjury.

It was shortly after these events that M. Jasmin wrote a long letter to M. Legros, in which, after tendering the most satisfactory apologies, he gave him a detailed account of Jacques Jasmin's marriage, his family, and what he had done for him personally. M. Legros, instead of being pacified, considered the dancing-master's epistle as a direct insult on his feelings. The only answer he condescended to return to it was, that he left Polydore and Jacques Jasmin to the workings of their own consciences; but that, for his part, he could never forgive them. Strange to say, M. Bourreux was glad to hear of M. Jasmin's good fortune: he might have been still better pleased, perhaps, had matters turned out otherwise; but he was pleased. As it has been discovered, in the Rue St. Denis, that his only fortune consists in an annuity which must die with him, and that, consequently, he has no property to bequeath, his importance is very much diminished; but it is pleasant to reflect that his temper is greatly improved.

The Jasmin family are happy and comfortable. M. Jasmin has been somewhat troubled by the polka mania, but he is reconciled to it now. He thinks his

wife prettier than ever, and idolizes his children. Upon the whole, he may be described as that human curiosity — a happy and contented individual. He has entirely forgotten that he once thought himself rich, though it is said he still remembers the miseries he had to endure in his fashionable apartment.

A SOIRÉE IN A PORTER'S LODGE.

THERE were porters formerly in Paris, now there are not. The porter was followed by the concierge, and to the concierge has succeeded a nondescript being, male or female, for whom there exists as yet no appropriate name. The portress was rough, bearish, and snappish; she wore a cotton gown, and a cotton kerchief was often set of one side on her head. The concierge was more of a bourgeoisie, and had a middle-class look about her, but the lady who has succeeded to both of these is different altogether. She is more of what was formerly understood by the fallen word of genteel: she lives on the ground-floor in an elegant apartment with sofas and arm-chairs. She speaks to you in exquisite French, pure and precise, and she smooths her hands as she talks; she is musical too, and has a piano for her children; her husband has a soldier-like look, and wears something like a bit of red ribbon in his button hole, but he is not often seen. In short, these are not porters; they condescend to guard the gates of a stately mansion, and to answer inquiries they keep a charwoman, who takes up the letters — but you must give up all claim to penetration, tact, and good breeding, if you attempt to mix up these genteel decayed people with the lowbred,

loud-tongued, and thoroughly vulgar porters and portresses of old times.

There are conservatives everywhere. Some cross people regret the old race. They hated them whilst they had them, but they are gone, and they weep.

"They had their virtues," they say, "and at all events they were not like *these*."

Well, in those good old times there lived, a few years ago, two Parisian porters, who already verged on the concierges. It was agreed on all hands that Monsieur and Madame Bichonnet were not ordinary porters. They resided in the handsomest house of a respectable street of Paris; their lodge, situated on the ground-floor, on the left-hand side of the passage, at a convenient distance from the staircase, was large and airy, and looked upon the street. Their duties, which consisted in attending to the door, and keeping the house clean, were unusually light, and very liberally remunerated — considering that, like all the members of their worthy class, they were lodged rent free, and kept by their landlord and the joint contributions of the lodgers in wood and candle-light all the year round, without mentioning the presents they regularly received on New-Year's Day. In short, M. and Madame Bichonnet were, as the reader can see, very comfortable people in their way; and they might have been perfectly happy, had not an unlucky spirit of ambition taken possession of their hearts, and made them resolved to shine, no matter at what cost. They gave parties, to which the whole neighbourhood was invited; and so conspicuous did they render themselves, that the lodge of the Bichonnets became ere long a term synonymous with the focus of porter-scandal and refine-

ment. Need we say the envy, the ridicule, the heart-burnings, the tittle-tattle they raised around them? They lived in hot water, and enjoyed it. "The fate of genius, my love," said Monsieur Bichonnet, rubbing his hands, and addressing Madame Bichonnet, "the distinguishing mark of our superiority over the common and vulgar herd."

"I know they all hate me," murmured Madame Bichonnet.

"Ha, ha," chuckled Monsieur Bichonnet, "I like it; they hated Napoleon, too, but he made them quake! Let them — let them!"

For be it said en passant, it is quite an error to suppose that every one likes being loved. Love is sweet, but to some tempers hatred is far sweeter. To Monsieur Bichonnet it was an acknowledgment of superiority: to Madame Bichonnet it was a comfortable soothing proof of the badness of the world and the treachery of friends; but it is time to describe this remarkable couple.

Like many illustrious individuals, the porter and his wife did not, however, differ greatly from the common race of mortals. Madame Bichonnet was a tall, muscular, rawboned woman, whose florid complexion beamed with health, but who was, nevertheless, in a very delicate state; for, as she frequently assured her lodgers and friends in a low, languishing tone, "she knew she was in a deep decline, and had already given up all worldly thoughts." M. Bichonnet was a thin, tan-skinned little man, with a bright, restless, brown eye, and a highly pragmatical and consequential eye-brow. He seldom spoke, but the little he did say was all concerning his rank and importance in society.

He had also a few profound ideas on politics, and "our duties to our fellow-men," of which he occasionally allowed his friends to catch a glimpse; for as those ideas were so very deep, they could scarcely be said to fathom them. Amongst M. Bichonnet's favourite notions, was the firm belief entertained by him, ever since the year 1830, that Louis Philippe had not six months to remain on the throne. This assertion, which he made with many mysterious nods and hints, had given him, amongst the timid and prudent people of the neighbourhood, a reputation of carbonarism. It was even strongly suspected by some wise heads that the convivial parties given in his lodge were only banquets offered to republicans in disguise. These malicious rumours did not, however, prevent M. and Madame Bichonnet from resolving to have a party on Twelfth Night of the year 183—. According to the usual custom, they were to have a cake; and in the earlier part of the evening M. Bichonnet went out to order it at the pastry-cook's before the arrival of the guests, leaving his wife, or, as he loved to call her, his spouse, alone in the lodge, seated in a soft-cushioned arm-chair opposite the fire, and dozing very comfortably; for, under pretence of making up for her bad nights, Madame Bichonnet was always dozing. She had not been long alone when her husband came in. Approaching the fire, he ceremoniously observed, "The night is very cool, my dear; I must beg your leave to keep on my hat."

M. Bichonnet would never have committed the solecism of doing such a thing without his wife's permission. Madame Bichonnet merely nodded assent, and seemed to expect something else; but as her hus-

band remained silent, she said, after a pause, "And the cake, my dear?"

"The cake is in the oven, my love. I looked at it and fastened my eye on the pastry-cook. 'That is the cake, — mind, that is the one,' I said, 'that and no other.' He laid his hand on his heart, and I kept my eye upon him. I know he hated me just then; but — but I rather like that."

And Monsieur Bichonnet stood on the rug with his hands behind his back, in the memorable attitude.

"Of course it is a good cake?" said Madame Bichonnet, opening one eye.

"My love!" said Monsieur Bichonnet, with mild reproach; then he added softly and impressively: "it is a large, golden-coloured cake."

"Perhaps I shall never live to eat another," mournfully sighed Madame Bichonnet. "Will it be here soon?" she added, after a pause.

"In less than half an hour, my dear." Another pause.

"Will it be quite hot?" asked Madame, opening her half-shut eyes.

"Quite hot."

The portress uttered something which sounded like a hum of satisfaction, and remained silent. In less than half an hour the cake arrived, carried by the pastry-cook's boy.

Monsieur Bichonnet stood and fastened his mesmeric eye on the lad; who bore the look like a genuine gamin, that is to say, most impudently. The porter was convinced of the identity of the cake, and with a lofty wave of the hand dismissed the boy.

"Go, lad," he said.

"Au revoir, Père Bichonnet," was the audacious reply.

The boy was gone, but Monsieur Bichonnet stood rooted to the rug, aghast and mute; a pastry-cook's boy had called him "Père Bichonnet." At length he recovered, and smiled at the youthful sally, like a magnanimous Newfoundland who disdains to resent the bark of a young cur.

"The cake will get cold," rather snappishly said Madame Bichonnet.

"My dear, I beg your pardon," said her husband, with a start.

At once he placed the cake between two earthen dishes which had been kept warming for this purpose; and, as Madame Bichonnet observed, "it really looked like a cake you might wish to eat on your death-bed." Some time elapsed, and though it was past seven, none of the guests arrived. Madame Bichonnet, who sat near the cake, and smelt it, became very impatient at this unreasonable delay, and in a querulous tone inquired "if they were coming?" Her husband answered he did not know, but that he strongly suspected M. and Madame Miroiton, with their young ladies, — he scorned the vulgar expression of daughters, — would soon make their appearance; upon which Madame Bichonnet observed, with a significant smile, they had done well to invite M. 'Tourneur to come.

Monsieur and Madame Bichonnet had both a gentle passion: they were fond of match-making. Monsieur Bichonnet said "he felt it was a duty he owed to his fellow-men." Madame Bichonnet never assigned any reason for her liking, but when good-natured people

repeated to her what other good-natured people had said: "that she liked the wedding dinner," Madame Bichonnet turned up her eyes and clasped her hands, and asked "how *she* could think of such things, with one foot in the grave?" We will not say what was or was not the truth, but this we can safely declare: the Bichonnets never gave a party without having at the same time some matrimonial campaign in view.

On this occasion the person for whose conjugal felicity they felt so lively an interest was a young shoemaker, M. Tourneur, who had recently settled in the street, and whose handsome shop was precisely opposite the window of the lodge. Antoine Tourneur was not yet a rich man, but his business promised well; his character was irreproachable, and though he could not exactly be termed handsome, good temper was written on his frank, open features. He had, moreover, that smart, tidy look so characteristic of the Parisian journeyman. Indeed, Madame Bichonnet averred, that of all the shoemakers who met at Montmartre on St. Crispin's Day — their yearly festival — he undoubtedly cut the most gallant figure; and that the dark mustache which he wore, notwithstanding his peaceful avocation, was perfectly irresistible. It is true that, though possessed of those advantages, Antoine Tourneur had not expressed to Madame Bichonnet the least wish for a wife; but as she concluded that he wanted one, she resolved to provide him with one without delay. Fortunately for her purpose, she found two ladies — in the street too — who seemed quite willing to enter into her views. Perhaps it will be objected that one lady was enough for the purpose; but the prudent portress was of another

opinion; she thought that if one did not suit, the other might; and that, in all cases, they would set one another off. This had been her plan hitherto; and, to say the truth, she had vast experience in those matters.

The eldest of those ladies — both of whom were well known to Tourneur, whose customers they were — was Mademoiselle Ursule, the staymaker, who lived next door to him. She was, according to her own assertion, twenty-five years of age; but her features — without speaking of common report, which said ten — assigned her at least six or seven more summers. She was thin and withered-looking; she dressed very richly and tastily; and there was certainly nothing vulgar about her. It was reported that she had money in the bank; and this, as Mademoiselle Miroiton, her rival, spitefully observed, was her only attraction. It was seemingly a powerful one, for it had enabled her to refuse several good offers of marriage. Mademoiselle Miroiton, who was a dressmaker, and the daughter of one of the neighbouring porters, had no money like Mademoiselle Ursule; but she was a good figure, had a brilliant complexion, a tolerable quantity of glossy dark hair, and a sparkling, though rather scornful, black eye; so that, as Madame Bichonnet wisely concluded, if Antoine Tourneur liked beauty, Mademoiselle Miroiton would do remarkably well for him; whereas, if he preferred wealth, Mademoiselle Ursule would be quite the thing. Having first delicately sounded the two ladies, and found them very favourably disposed, she next invited them to come and spend with her "The Evening of the Kings," as Twelfth Night is termed, intimating to them that An-

toine Tourneur would be there, with only a few friends.

Just as Madame Bichonnet's patience was exhausted, and she observed very snappishly that the cake was quite ruined, a knock at the door announced the arrival of her expected guests. ■

Monsieur Bichonnet stretched his arm, and pulled a brown string like a bell-rope, and which — as all visitors of Paris know — is a sort of magic string, wherewith, without so much as stirring from his chair — the French porter raises the lock of the ponderous street door, and lets or keeps you in at his pleasure. On this occasion Monsieur Bichonnet was magnanimous; he admitted the visitors: they came in rushing, giggling, screaming. Madame Bichonnet turned pale. All the Miroitons had come. An olympic frown gathered on the smooth brow of Monsieur Bichonnet, and he drew himself up rather stiffly. The Miroitons had taken a liberty. They had brought all the young Miroitons, who had not been asked.

The glass-door of the lodge flew open; in rushed two romping Miroitons of the male sex, and of the ages of seven and nine. A prim little girl of twelve followed; then Monsieur and Madame Miroiton, a corpulent couple, and lastly, Mademoiselle Miroiton, who laughed rather loudly at something Antoine Tourneur was whispering in her ear.

"Ah! how good you are to have all come," said Madame Bichonnet, faintly, for she thought of the size of her cake.

Madame Miroiton had a sharp temper.

"No, we did not all come," she said shortly, "poor Jules is always sacrificed," — a stabbing look at her

husband, — “*he* must stay and mind the lodge, poor lamb.”

“I really do not see why he should,” was the very unexpected rejoinder of Monsieur Miroiton. “My lodgers have not behaved so generously on New-Year’s Day, that the pleasures of any member of my family should be sacrificed to their convenience,” added Monsieur Miroiton, looking round impressively. “Adolphe, go and fetch your brother; tell him to rake out the fire, and extinguish the lamp, and come directly. Last New-Year’s Day brought me in five francs from the first-floor, three from the second, ten and fifty centimes from the rest of the house, — total, eighteen francs fifty centimes. I put it to the company present, Is the liberty of my family to be sacrificed for that miserable sum? Adolphe, go and fetch your brother.”

Monsieur Miroiton sat down smilingly. Now the irritating part of this speech was, that it held forth hopes impossible to realize, and that Monsieur Miroiton knew it.

“Sit down, Adolphe,” said Madame Miroiton, to her youngest son. “Your brother Jules would not come *now* after the affront that has been put upon his feelings.” She darted another angry look at her husband, and sat down too.

This little family-squabble was barely over, when a gentle lady-like tap was heard at the glass window of the lodge, and Mademoiselle Ursule appeared. She was, as usual, very elegantly attired.

“What airs she gives herself!” whispered Mademoiselle Miroiton to her sister, who replied with a prim smile of assent.

"I hope Mademoiselle Ursule is quite well," patronizingly observed Monsieur Bichonnet.

"Quite well," was the stately reply, "I thank you. It is cool this evening."

Mademoiselle Ursule sat down, carelessly displayed a delicate cambric pocket-handkerchief, and meaning just then to be highly disdainful, she superciliously applied a scent-bottle to an aristocratically-shaped nose, and frigidly answered every remark dropped by either of her hosts. Matters would not have got on very comfortably had not the remaining guests gradually appeared. Madame Bichonnet had asked them to fill up the vacant spaces of her tableau, now quite thronged with the young Miroitons. These individuals were two lady's maids who resided in the house, and a mysterious melancholy-looking young man, who lived nobody knew how, and always sang comic songs wherever he was invited.

When they were all seated, and there was some talk of cutting up the cake, Madame Bichonnet perceived a circumstance she had hitherto overlooked: there were in all 13 individuals present. Now amongst Madame Bichonnet's weaknesses was the vulgar belief, that when 13 persons met one of them must certainly die within the year. On noticing this ominous fact, she therefore gave a very dismal groan, and intimated to her friends *they* need not have any fear, as she was certainly the doomed one. Everybody immediately sympathised with her, with the exception of Madame Miroiton, who, being a strong-minded woman, loudly asserted that this was a weakness she must overcome, and that she would not encourage her in it by sending home one of her children. Antoine Tourneur gallantly

offered to absent himself, but Madame Bichonnet would not hear of it.

"Bichonnet."

"My love."

"Go and ask Rosine to join us."

"At once, my dear," replied the obedient Bichonnet, with whom to hear was to obey.

"Well, what are you moaning for?" stoutly said Madame Miroiton.

Madame Bichonnet looked at the cake meant for nine people, and destined to be eaten by fourteen, and remembering the greedy young Miroitons, she thought she had a right to moan; but she desperately replied that nothing ailed her, and submitted to fate.

"Madame Bichonnet," here put in Mademoiselle Ursule, "may I ask who is the person M. Bichonnet has gone to fetch? Of course the person is reputable; but still, my dear Madame Bichonnet, there are limits, social limits, which every one does not feel inclined to transgress. and I should like to know who that Rosine is. Not a cook, I hope!"

"Oh! dear no," cried Madame Bichonnet, seeming shocked at the bare idea. "I have a horror of cooks!"

"So coarse!" said the lady's maids.

"Rosine is a bonnet-maker," said Madame Bichonnet; "she lives in one of the attics; a very nice girl, whom I like to encourage."

The entrance of Rosine, who came in shrinkingly behind M. Bichonnet, precluded any further comments.

Although Rose was "a nice girl," her entrance into the lodge was witnessed with anything but pleasure by Mademoiselle Ursule and the daughter of the Miroitons.

The former, especially, was highly indignant: the idea of associating with a bonnet-maker seemed to her perfectly preposterous; and, notwithstanding the beseeching and timid glance which the young girl cast towards her, Mademoiselle Ursule immediately set her down for an artful, designing creature, and applied her scent-bottle to her nose with great contempt. Mademoiselle Miroiton was at first equally annoyed; but on noticing the paleness of the new-comer, who was, moreover, in deep mourning, she immediately made room for her near herself, concluding that the contrast would greatly enhance the brilliancy of her own complexion, and the freshness of her attire.

The first impression which Rosine's appearance was calculated to produce, was not indeed to her advantage. But though she might at first be thought plain, few persons who examined her closely thought so long. Her features were not remarkably regular, but she had a profusion of fair silken tresses, which beamed like gold beneath her black crape cap, eyes of a deep azure blue, dark eyebrows and eyelashes, and a sweet smile and pleasant voice, which rendered her at times quite fascinating, notwithstanding the languid and sickly expression her features had contracted during a life of privation and poverty. Having lost her mother a few months back, she was now an orphan; and as she was not a native of Paris, she had remained wholly friendless and alone in the great city. Fortunately, however, she found some employment in the house of a great milliner, who lived in the street; and although she had to toil almost constantly, in order to earn enough for her support, she was never heard to repine or to complain.

A gentle, complying temper, that made her reluctant to utter the unpleasant word "no," had, spite her secret reluctance, induced her to accede to M. Bichonnet's request, and to join the party in the lodge. When the guests had resumed their seats, and the lodge door had once more enclosed them all in an atmosphere of warmth and comfort, Antoine Tourneur, looking round him, said:

"There are two bottles of champagne here: I volunteer that we should uncork them."

"Wait!" anxiously cried Madame Bichonnet, too anxious to remember her politeness, "wait, Monsieur Tourneur, if you please, Bichonnet!"

"My love," replied Monsieur.

"Take the key of the first-floor lodgers, if you please."

"I have it, my dear," said Monsieur Bichonnet, taking down one of the keys hanging on a row of pegs.

"Open the front door," pursued Madame, "enter the dining-room, open the buffet; in the right-hand corner you will find champagne glasses; take fourteen and bring them down if you please, Bichonnet."

"Yes, my love."

Monsieur Bichonnet took a light and departed on his errand; but he was scarcely gone when he returned empty-handed, and lofty indignation beaming on his expressive countenance.

"The dining-room door was locked!" he said, impressively rolling his eye round on the company.

"Locked!" said Madame Bichonnet, sitting bolt upright.

"Locked!" repeated Monsieur, and he sat down.

"Can we not manage with tumblers?" suggested Antoine Tourneur.

"Impossible, Monsieur," said Madame Bichonnet, "drink champagne out of tumblers! no, no, I hope we are not come to that yet. But what amazes me, is the insolence and duplicity of these people. What do they leave the key of the outer door for if they lock the inner one?"

"It is a trap, an insulting trap," said Monsieur Bichonnet.

The Miroitons agreed that it was abominable, but suggested no remedy to this lamentable state of things. One of the lady's maids, seeing that there was some chance of the champagne remaining in the bottles for want of the all-important glasses, at length hinted that she might perhaps get them from their cook, provided an invitation accompanied the request. The prospect of a fifteenth partaker of the cake almost upset Madame Bichonnet's equanimity, and Mademoiselle Ursule so solemnly protested that she would walk out if a vulgar cook came in, that the lady's maid declared she would get the glasses without the invitation, on which errand she accordingly departed, and within ten minutes she returned, bringing champagne glasses for the grown-up members of the company, and liquor glasses for the junior Miroitons.

"I see through it," audibly whispered Madame Miroiton to her husband. Madame Bichonnet ignored the remark, and Mademoiselle Ursule, restored to good-humour by the non-appearance of the cook, despatched one of the young Miroitons for three dozens of those Rheims biscuits, without which orthodox drinkers assert that champagne cannot be drunk.

In the mean while a good deal of talking went on in different parts of the company: M. Bichonnet, who was more than usually dignified, conversed in a mysterious tone with M. Miroiton, a simple-minded man, discussing the respective merits of Thiers and Guizot, and assuring him, in a low, subdued voice, that before six months he might expect to see Louis Philippe dethroned. On hearing this piece of intelligence, the pacific M. Miroiton looked uneasily round, and with a cough of dismay, inquired of his friend how he had learned this. M. Bichonnet gave a mysterious nod, and merely said "he knew it."

"But, my good Monsieur Bichonnet," urged the alarmed Miroiton, "I hope you have no ill-will against the king?"

"Sir," solemnly replied Bichonnet, "I entertain no evil sentiment against Louis Philippe; fate has never thrown us together, and we have, I may say, nothing in common either in feelings or opinions; but it is my duty to my fellow-men to inform them, when the opportunity occurs, that before six months have passed over their heads, he will have ceased to sit on the throne of France." And leaving M. Miroiton in a state of unutterable dismay, he turned from him with a mysterious glance, as though thinking that enough had been said on the subject.

Whilst this political discussion was going on, Mesdames Bichonnet and Miroiton were engaged in informing one another of the faults and merits of their respective lodgers. Madame Miroiton greatly inveighed against the avariciousness of hers; Madame Bichonnet made no similar complaints, but only lamented the

want of politeness which existed in their conduct towards her.

"They really are not polite," she added, sighing; "if a letter comes they want me to take it up at once."

"Absurd!" said Madame Miroiton.

"Ridiculous!" gently suggested Madame Bichonnet, "and quite useless, for I never do take up letters. I do not on principle."

"Quite right."

"Then there is the first-floor lodger. Would you believe it, Madame Miroiton, he gets vexed because I read his newspaper before sending it up to him."

Madame Miroiton stared.

"A fact, my dear Madame Miroiton, a fact. In short, they have all of them gone to such lengths that Monsieur Bichonnet and I have been obliged to draw up a little code of regulations, of which they each possess a fair copy. Here is ours; and she read aloud:

"Firstly. — All lodgers are particularly requested to scrape and wipe their shoes before they go up-stairs, that they may not give undue trouble to Monsieur Bichonnet.

"Secondly. — Lodgers are not allowed to have children, unless born in the house, in which case they shall not be expelled; or to keep dogs, cats, or birds, or to receive visitors accompanied by these animals.

"Thirdly. — Lodgers are warned not to play or practise on any musical instrument whatsoever, under penalty of instant dismissal."

"Very judicious," said Madame Miroiton.

"And yet, spite of that," replied Madame Bichonnet, "there is a piano in the house. How it got in no one knows. Bichonnet declares it must have been hoisted up from the street; I am convinced it was smuggled in under the aspect of a huge chest of drawers. I never half believed in that big chest of drawers; but now that the thing is in we cannot expel it; we cannot even discover where it is, as soon as we go to make inquiries; in short, it is the misery of our lives. But to resume:

"Fourthly. — On account of Madame Bichonnet's delicate health lodgers are requested never to stay out later than twelve o'clock at night. After that hour M. and Madame Bichonnet will feel themselves under the painful necessity of not admitting them. N.B. Lodgers can come in *at any hour* on paying a fine of fifty centimes (five-pence.)"

On hearing this admirable code, Madame Miroiton sighed, and only wished they could have it too; but their lodgers were so restive, they would never agree to it, and Miroiton could never be induced to propose it to them.

"We never propose those things to our lodgers," superciliously observed Madame Bichonnet. "We do them, and they submit as a matter of course. Bichonnet thinks that the discipline lodgers undergo from their porters conduces to the peace of the state: it breaks them in to the rest. Only one thing that we tried did we fail in: we wanted to have an iron bar fixed to the open door, so retrenching the space through which people pass, that only thin individuals could get in and out. We wanted to do away with the basket and

parcel nuisance. But they got savage; they applied to a magistrate, who would not allow the bar; for once we were conquered."

Whilst the two ladies were thus engaged in laying down the laws of the social world to which they belonged, the younger portion of the company had gathered round Antoine Tourneur, whose good-humour rendered him a general favourite. The young man who sang the comic songs, and the two lady's maids, whom Madame Bichonnet had invited because they were neither young nor pretty, as much as through any other motive, listened to his sallies in silence; but the Miroiton part of the family were in perfect ecstasies. Mademoiselle Ursule was too genteel to seem much amused; but as her vigilant eye noticed that though his discourse was directed towards her and Mademoiselle Miroiton, yet his glances more frequently wandered in the direction of Rosine, she began to look very superciliously on the young milliner once more, setting her down as an "artful designing creature." As somebody said something about the champagne, which had in the mean while been forgotten, Madame Bichonnet proposed to cut up the cake first. This was accordingly done, but who was to hand it round? To ask Mademoiselle Miroiton to do so was to offend Mademoiselle Ursule, and *vice versâ*. By putting the office on Rosine, Madame Bichonnet thought to keep clear of mischief, and she accordingly did so.

Rosine complied with the request, and performed her task with mingled modesty and grace, which Mademoiselle Ursule and Miroiton, both agreeing for once, internally pronounced sad affectation. Antoine was the last person to whom she handed his share of the

cake, and perhaps for this reason, or perhaps because, as Mademoiselle Miroiton now began to think, he was engaged in gazing on the young milliner, he neglected to examine his portion of the cake, in order to see whether it contained the bean always inserted in it, and which renders him to whose lot it falls king for the evening.

The young man who sang the comic songs immediately discovered that he had not the bean; the lady's maids found out as much; Madame Miroiton declared she had not got it; all her children echoed the words; M. Bichonnet did not speak, not thinking it dignified; and M. Miroiton, because his mouth was full.

"I suppose Mademoiselle Ursule is queen?" ironically observed Mademoiselle Miroiton.

"I am not queen," sharply answered the stay-maker, with a tone and look which seemed to say she might have been if she would.

Mademoiselle Miroiton coloured, and in a softened tone said to Antoine, "Are you king, Monsieur Tourneur?"

Antoine started, and turning his eyes from Rosine, for the first time opened his portion of the cake. No sooner had he done so, than the dark bean appeared, enshrined in the yellow crust. Immediately a loud cry of "Tourneur is king! Long live the king!" resounded in the lodge. Antoine laughed, and bowing, intimated his wish of speaking; but the loyalty of his new subjects was not thus easily checked, and the Miroiton part of the company especially showed their delight by making an unusual noise. When he was at last allowed to speak, he returned thanks in a short speech, and concluded by drinking the health of all present.

No sooner had he raised his glass to his lips, than the cries of "The king drinks! Long live the king!" again echoed round. But when this first excitement had somewhat subsided, Antoine was requested by Madame Bichonnet to use his privilege, and name a queen for the evening. On hearing this, Mademoiselle Miroiton looked modestly on her plate, whilst Mademoiselle Ursule applied her scent-bottle to her nose.

"Ho, ho!" continued Madame Bichonnet, with a knowing wink, and glancing towards the spot where Mademoiselle Miroiton and the staymaker were both seated, so that it could not be known precisely to which of the two she meant to allude, "I think I know who will be queen."

She paused, struck aghast with astonishment and dismay — for Antoine had, with a low bow, placed the bean in the glass of Rosine, thus proclaiming her queen for the evening.

A deep ominous silence followed this daring act. Madame Miroiton gazed on Madame Bichonnet with an indignant glance, as much as to say, "You see it!" and Madame Bichonnet turned up her eyes, and clasped her hands in amazement. M. Miroiton did not seem to know what to make of it; and M. Bichonnet solemnly shook his head two or three times, like one whom nothing can astonish. On perceiving Antoine's meaning, Rosine had coloured deeply, and, by the timid deprecating look she cast around, seemed to implore indulgence for her involuntary fault. But the singer of comic songs was staring point-blank at the wall; the two lady's maids, who readily took their cue, seemed, by the glances they exchanged, to say, "What a shocking creature!" the looks of the Miroitons and the

Bichonnets were equally stern and forbidding. Mademoiselle Miroiton was too desperately incensed to strive to hide her feelings; and though Mademoiselle Ursule partly triumphed in the mortification suffered by her younger and more attractive rival, her whole attitude showed the consciousness of injured dignity. Antoine alone looked kindly on her, and seemed to resent very much the manner in which the object of his choice was treated. The truth was that, having perceived the drift of Madame Bichonnet's hints and allusions, he had felt piqued at being disposed of without his consent, and would have asked either of the lady's maids to be queen sooner than Mademoiselle Miroiton or Mademoiselle Ursule. Wishing to relieve Rosine from her embarrassment, he drank her health with studied politeness; but when he cried out, "Long live the queen!" no voice save M. Bichonnet's, who felt himself bound in honour to reply, echoed his. Poor Rosine grew pale, and laid down her untasted glass, whilst Antoine frowned on the silent and rigid Miroitons. Willing, however, to make an effort towards conciliation, the young shoemaker said with a smile, addressing the company, "Ladies and gentlemen, let me hope you will drink the health of your queen."

The melancholy-looking young man who sang the comic songs immediately drank a glass of wine, first muttering something which might sound as an assent to or a protest against the toast, just as the parties were inclined; but no one else pledged Antoine. Mademoiselle Miroiton, indeed, eyed him with great contempt, yawned audibly, and looking at her mother, carelessly observed it was late enough to go home. To this Madame Miroiton assented, and rising im-

mediately, helped her daughter to put on her cloak and bonnet — for Mademoiselle Miroiton had lately assumed the badge of distinction. It was in vain that Madame Bichonnet begged of them to stay a little longer; they smiled scornfully in reply to all her intreaties; whilst, heedless of his wife's indignant glance, M. Miroiton, determined to make the best of the little time left, hastily gulped down two or three glasses of champagne.

"Pray, do stay," urged Madame Bichonnet.

"No, ma'am, thank you," dryly answered Mademoiselle Miroiton. "I can assure you, ma'am, we are not blind; we can see very well through your schemes, and those of other people."

"Yes, indeed we can," echoed her mother, with a scornful toss of the head; whilst even M. Miroiton, roused at last, and having now quite done with the champagne, repeated, "Ay, sir, we can," addressing M. Bichonnet; and with his wife on one side, and his daughter on the other, stalked out of the lodge, followed by his children, and closed the street door behind him with a thundering slam.

When they were gone — she would have scorned to do it before — Mademoiselle Ursule rose; and though she only opened her lips to say "good-night," the manner in which she uttered the words spoke volumes. The singer of comic songs, perceiving that his services were no longer necessary, departed, under pretence of seeing her home — she lived in the house opposite; and the two lady's maids took the same opportunity of saying something about their mistresses — who were both out — wanting them, and left the lodge, where only Antoine, Rosine, with the porter

and his wife, now remained. After their departure, Antoine made several ineffectual attempts to create a little mirth; the Bichonnets were both dismally solemn; and Rosine, who began to fear she had been the occasion of a vast deal of mischief, was too ill at ease to enjoy herself any longer. Seeing the uselessness of his efforts, Antoine at length took leave of his hosts, without taking any particular notice of Rosine.

When he was gone, M. Bichonnet turned towards the young milliner, and in a solemn tone began, "Mademoiselle, I feel it is a duty I owe to my fellow-men —" But there was something in Rosine's mild mild appealing glance which seemed to reprove him: he paused, looked embarrassed, and observed in a gentler tone, "Well, well, I see you understand me; and so — good-night." Rosine made no reply; but rising somewhat proudly, she retired, bitterly regretting having accepted the unlucky invitation, which had so disturbed the harmony of the evening.

Several days elapsed, during which nothing of importance seemingly occurred. Mademoiselle Ursule, who, since the Evening of the Day of the Kings, had taken upon herself the office of observing whatever was going on in the street, nevertheless found the opportunity of making several curious and interesting remarks. Thus she noticed that, on the Friday which followed that memorable evening, Madame Bichonnet, notwithstanding the delicate state of her health and the severe cold, actually left her lodge, and ventured to cross the street, in order to enter the abode of the Miroitons; that she remained there upwards of an hour; and that, when she left at last, her features wore the expression of one highly satisfied with the success

of a momentous enterprise. Mademoiselle Ursule, moreover, perceived that a very unusual agitation prevailed in the porter's lodge: through some mysterious means she even learned that, during the course of the day, several secret conferences took place between Madame Bichonnet and the cook of the first-floor lodgers. M. Bichonnet himself seemed more solemn and dignified than ever. At last the important truth came out: the Bichonnets were, on the next Sunday, to give a dinner, to which the Miroitons and Antoine Tourneur were invited. The mystery was, however, kept up until the Saturday afternoon. It then happened that the portress let out an inkling of the fact to one of her neighbours, the consequence of which was, that, in less than five minutes, Mademoiselle Ursule entered the shoemaker's shop.

"Sir," said she, addressing Antoine Tourneur, who stood behind the counter, "I am in want of a pair of shoes; will you take my measure?" The young man bowed, and very politely led the way to a little back parlour, where the staymaker took a seat, and in very slow and stately manner gave him numberless instructions concerning the size, colour, and shape of her chaussure. Although Antoine heard her patiently to the end, Mademoiselle Ursule seemed to mistake the nature of his feelings, for she observed, "I see you are in a hurry, and I am sorry to detain you; but as I shall be very busy next week, and as I shall not see you until the shoes are made —"

"What!" interrupted Antoine, "do we not meet to-morrow evening?"

"Where should we meet, sir?" asked the staymaker, with much seeming surprise.

"At Madame Bichonnet's, of course," said the young man.

Mademoiselle Ursule seemed to endeavour to recollect who the Bichonnets were; then, as though suddenly remembering, she loftily observed, "Oh, bless me, no! I shall spend to-morrow at home, sir, with poor dear Rosine."

"And is not Mademoiselle Rosine to be there either?" eagerly asked Antoine, whose features expressed some disappointment.

"Really, Monsieur Tourneur," sharply observed the spinster staymaker, "you must have an extraordinary opinion of myself and Rosine, to imagine that, after the insults we have there endured, we could ever be induced to cross again the threshold of Madame Bichonnet's lodge."

"I beg your pardon," confusedly answered Antoine; "but when Madame Bichonnet spoke of my meeting pleasant company to-morrow, I really thought she meant you."

Though somewhat soothed by the compliment, Mademoiselle Ursule smiled with unutterable scorn. "Sir," she loftily said, "I will not speak of myself; I will speak of Rosine, whom Mademoiselle Miroiton has maliciously slandered, for what motive I know not" — Mademoiselle Ursule uttered the words in so significant a tone, as to leave no doubt but she was perfectly aware of it — "and whom, but for me, she would have deprived of the means of earning her bread." Antoine looked up with astonishment: the staymaker continued — "Rosine works for a great milliner, who resides in the house where Mademoiselle Miroiton's parents are porters. Since the Evening of the Kings,

this creature has so contrived her vile insinuations, that Rosine has been refused any more work. Seeing her pass by the day before yesterday all in tears, I called her in, and, as she can fortunately stitch very neatly, engaged her to work for me on the instant, so that she shall have work in spite of the whole Miroiton brood."

"And has everything really happened as you relate it?" very gravely asked Antoine.

"Exactly so, sir," dryly replied Mademoiselle Ursule. "Pray do not forget my shoes. Good-day to you. I suppose," she carelessly added, "you go to the Bichonnets' to-morrow?"

Antoine bowed in token of assent; and without seeming to notice the smile and glance of contempt which she cast upon him, he ceremoniously conducted Mademoiselle Ursule to the door. The staymaker went home, sorely puzzled to make out the shoemaker's real intentions, and quite disposed to quarrel with him for taking no heed of poor neglected Rosine, and dining with those odious Miroitons and Bichonnets; but though in such ill-humour, that her first act on entering the work-room was to scold Rosine for some imaginary fault, she had enough of self-control not to say a word about Antoine Tourneur, or the step she had taken. Perhaps the reader will feel surprised to see the staymaker now taking part for the young girl whom she treated with such contempt on the Evening of the Kings; but Mademoiselle Ursule did not pique herself in the least on acting upon logical principles: she boasted that she had "strong feelings and lively sensibilities — that she was the creature of impulse,"

&c. — which of course explained everything. The truth was that, although, as she herself truly asserted, she had never experienced the passion of love, she had however — partly through Madame Bichonnet's hints — begun to think lately that her young neighbour, M. Tourneur, might prove an acceptable partner for life. His politeness she construed into a deeper feeling, veiled by profound respect; and although she felt no strong affection for him, yet there is no knowing to what pity might have led even her rather unsusceptible heart, when the rivalry of Mademoiselle Miroiton awoke all her jealous feelings, and for the present stifled tenderer emotions.

When Rosine entered the porter's lodge on the evening of the festival, she immediately looked upon her as on another rival, and found her artful, designing, &c. It is very likely this impression might never have been effaced, if Mademoiselle Miroiton had not chanced to take precisely the same view of the subject; which Mademoiselle Ursule no sooner saw, than she immediately perceived that she must have been in the wrong. There could be no possible sympathy between her and her rival. When she learned the unworthy treatment the young milliner had met with from the porter's daughter, she felt highly indignant; and, as much for a feeling of justice, as from the wish of annoying Mademoiselle Miroiton, she took her into her employment. As she was naturally kind-hearted, the simplicity and gentleness of Rosine soon charmed her; and reflecting — for, from his conduct on the Evening of the Kings' festival, she began to suspect she might have been deceived in Antoine's feelings — that she had lived too long single to resign herself to

the many tribulations of wedded life, and that it would be highly imprudent in her to trust herself to the fickleness of man, she prudently resolved to discard Antoine altogether: a task which she found the easier, that her heart had never been in the least affected. But though she might be quite willing to give him up for herself, she was anything but desirous that Mademoiselle Miroiton should enjoy the triumph of supplanting her; indeed, as she had a shocking temper, she felt it quite a charity to prevent their union. In short, she resolved that it should not be her fault if her rival ever became Madame Tourneur. It is true Antoine did not seem very deeply smitten; but then there was no knowing what arts might be employed. Ah! if he only knew what a dear good creature Rosine was; and much prettier than Mademoiselle Miroiton too! There could be no doubt about that! Indeed it was no difficult task: a shockingly vulgar creature! She herself, though not quite so fresh perhaps, might venture to compare. But even in her thoughts Mademoiselle Ursule was modest: she hated to speak of her personal advantages!

Such being her feelings on this subject, it is no matter of wonder that Mademoiselle Ursule should be exceedingly cross, when, on the Sunday afternoon, she perceived the Miroitons proceeding to the Bichonnets'; but when she actually saw Antoine taking the arm of Mademoiselle Miroiton, dressed out in all her finery, and who, as she averred, cast a glance of ironical triumph on her as she passed by, her anger broke out in vehement denunciations against the faithlessness of men in general, and Antoine Tourneur's want of spirit in particular. Rosine gently endeavoured to say a few

words for the culprit, but she was immediately silenced by the indignant staymaker.

Several days elapsed, and notwithstanding her anxiety on this subject, Mademoiselle Ursule could not ascertain how the dinner of the Bichonnets had passed. The cook of the first-floor lodgers indeed informed her of the number of dishes served on the table, but further than this her knowledge did not extend, and the triumphant bearing of Mademoiselle Miroiton alone left her room to conjecture the issue of this important event. Towards the middle of the week, Antoine Tourneur brought home Mademoiselle Ursule's shoes himself. The staymaker received him very stiffly in the presence of Rosine, whose eyes seemed rivetted on her work, and sharply observed that the shoes did not fit. Contrary to her expectation perhaps, Antoine, far from disputing the fact, readily admitted it, and instantly offered to make her another pair. Mademoiselle Ursule, who was taken by surprise, and felt somewhat conscience-stricken — for the shoes were, in reality, an excellent fit — abruptly replied, that as she wanted them for the following Sunday, she must keep them such as they were.

"You can have the other pair by Saturday morning," calmly replied Antoine.

Still Mademoiselle Ursule objected; but taking up the shoes, the young man showed her so plainly they did not fit, that she at length gave up the point, and consented to have the other pair made. This being decided, Antoine, who seemed in no great hurry to depart, entered into a very animated conversation with Mademoiselle Ursule, and after exchanging a few words with Rosine, at length took his leave.

"Well," said the staymaker, now greatly mollified, "I must confess that, with all his faults, Monsieur Tourneur is really a nice young man. And you see, Rosine, what might happen, if I only wished for it." Rosine started, and looked somewhat surprised. Misunderstanding her feelings, Mademoiselle Ursule complacently continued: "Yes, my dear, did I not prefer leading a single life, I might be Madame Tourneur; but though I may give up this prospect, it is not in order to see that odious Mademoiselle Miroiton marry him; and really, child, I wonder you did not take more notice of him just now; who knows what may happen?" She paused, and nodded very significantly. But Rosine coloured, and looked unusually grave.

On the following Saturday Antoine called with the shoes, which were this time an admirable fit; so at least Mademoiselle Ursule said, and Antoine did not contradict her, although he made a longer stay than the last time, and was still more lively and pleasant. But notwithstanding his indirect attempts to enter into a conversation with her, Rosine was so silent and reserved, in spite of Mademoiselle Ursule's encouraging nods and winks, that the staymaker gave her a good scolding when the young man was gone — upbraiding her for her prudery, stiffness, and so forth. To her reproaches Rosine mildly but firmly answered:

"I will not appear to misunderstand you; but, with the exception of a very simple mark of politeness, what reason has Monsieur Tourneur given me to think that he looks upon me otherwise than as a stranger? And he being rich, and I poor, what would his opinion be of me if I seemed to think differently?"

"Very well, my dear," bitterly replied her friend;

“see him married to Mademoiselle Miroiton, and live and die an old maid, if such is your choice.”

Rosine made no reply, and here the subject was dropped. Although the shoes which Antoine had made for Mademoiselle Ursule were perhaps the best shoes that had ever been made (so she said at least), they were worn out in an incredibly short space of time; the consequence of which was, that she had to order another pair. She next discovered that she sadly wanted winter boots; then, as spring was coming on, a pair of summer ones. She even asserted that Rosine had nothing fit to put on her feet; that her shoes were too narrow; that they hurt her; and, in short, that M. Antoine Tourneur must take her measure. It was in vain for Rosine to protest against this; she was compelled to submit. The consequence of this was, that Antoine, who always made it a point — doubtless out of pure politeness — to take the measure and bring home the shoes and boots himself to his customers, was seldom less than two or three times a-week at Mademoiselle Ursule's house.

We must now return to M. and Madame Bichonnet, whom we have neglected too long. On the evening of the second Sunday which followed that on which they gave the dinner to the Miroitons, they were seated as usual in their lodge, Madame Bichonnet dozing in her arm-chair, and her husband looking on the fire, and thinking of nothing, or, as he more elegantly expressed it, “wrapped in profound meditation,” when they were suddenly startled by a loud knock at the street-door. M. Bichonnet pulled the string placed near him for this purpose, the door opened, and Mademoiselle Ursule showed her thin and prim countenance at the other

side of the glass casement which divided the lodge from the passage, and through means of which M. Bichonnet could reconnoitre every one who entered or left the house.

"Is Mademoiselle Rosine at home?" she hastily inquired. "Bless me, what shall I do?" she continued in a tone of deep disappointment, on being answered in the negative.

"I believe," politely answered M. Bichonnet, "Mademoiselle Rosine is gone to vespers."

"Oh, dear no," smilingly replied Mademoiselle Ursule; "she is gone to take a walk with her betrothed!"

"Her betrothed!" echoed the astonished porters.

"Yes," carelessly rejoined the staymaker; "she is to be married to Monsieur Antoine Tourneur next Sunday-week. I wanted to see her, in order to know whether she would have her wedding-dress of white *tulle* or muslin. But I daresay the muslin will look best. But bless me, now I think of it, she must be at home by this time, and I to stand talking here! Good-night, Monsieur; good-night, Madame Bichonnet." And Mademoiselle Ursule hastened away, with a look of the greatest consequence, leaving the porters so astonished, that it was several minutes before they recovered from the surprise into which she had thrown them.

"Poor Mademoiselle Miroiton!" exclaimed Madame Bichonnet, clasping her hands, and turning up her eyes, "I thought to have drunk her health at her marriage-dinner before I died; but it is all over now!"

"My dear," solemnly said M. Bichonnet, "this is what comes of mingling with people beneath you; this is —"

"Nay, Bichonnet," mildly interrupted his wife, "Rosine is a sweet-tempered girl, and she will really do better for Antoine than Mademoiselle Miroiton, with her high spirit. I daresay if I were to give her something, just a bit of lace, on the occasion of her marriage, it would not be thrown away; and I should like to see Antoine happily settled before I die. I am afraid the ceremony might affect my nerves; though I believe I should go, if they were to ask us to the dinner."

"But, my dear, think of Mademoiselle Miroiton," gravely observed her husband.

"Really I don't care about Mademoiselle Miroiton," sharply replied Madame Bichonnet; "her airs are insupportable; whereas I always liked dear little Rosine."

"I believe, my dear," solemnly said M. Bichonnet, "that you are in the right. If they ask us, we will go to the dinner. To be friendly with them is our greatest duty towards our fellow-men."

In short, it required very few arguments to convince this worthy couple that Antoine Tourneur could not have made a better choice than in the person of the modest little milliner, whom they henceforth treated with the most flattering distinction. On the next Sunday-week Rosine and Antoine were married, to the triumph of Mademoiselle Ursule, and the despair of Mademoiselle Miroiton. M. and Madame Bichonnet, who were amongst the guests, were delighted with the whole affair; which, indeed, they asserted, they had wished for and foreseen from the beginning. But though the bride and bridegroom were polite to them, there was not in their behaviour the warmth and cordiality which marked their intercourse with Made-

moiselle Ursule. This difference became still more marked after their marriage; for whereas the stay-maker was almost constantly their guest, the porters received no further invitations. Madame Bichonnet now began to think poor Mademoiselle Miroiton had been sadly used, and she called on her for the purpose of condoling with her misfortune; but the young lady, who had a high spirit, shut the door in her face, and informed M. Bichonnet's landlord of the code of regulations he had set up in his house; the consequence of which was, that the porters were discharged, and left the neighbourhood, "with the consciousness," as M. Bichonnet said, "of having vainly endeavoured to serve his fellow-men."

About a year after his marriage — need we say it proved a happy one? — Antoine met M. Bichonnet in a remote neighbourhood. He inquired after the health of Madame Bichonnet, and learned that it had greatly improved since they had opened a commercial establishment. Antoine looked surprised. "Yes," continued the former porter with his usual dignity, "we sell fried potatoes on the Pont-Neuf."

Antoine smiled, and wishing him every success, bade him farewell. Six months later he met him again. He was more thin and dignified than ever. Antoine hoped his affairs were in a flourishing state.

"No, sir, they are not," loftily replied M. Bichonnet; "the year has been dreadful for trade, and we have suffered like everybody. I suppose you have suffered too?"

"No, indeed; I was never better off."

"That is strange; all the tradespeople we know failed. But we have not, mind you. No, no, sir; we

have given up the potatoe concern, it is true, but our honour is unsullied."

"And where are you now?" asked Antoine.

"We have a porter's lodge in the Faubourg St. Antoine. A poor place, sir. Ah! times are changed since we ate the Kings' cake with you in our comfortable lodge."

Merely inquiring for his direction, Antoine took leave of M. Bichonnet. The same evening he held a long and private conference with his wife. Mademoiselle Ursule saw that something was going to take place; and though too proud to question them, she used her eyes and ears without scruple. The next morning she learned that Antoine was to call on his landlord, who resided in the house where Rosine had formerly lived, and which he had lately bought from its original possessor. What could Antoine want with him? For several days she could learn nothing, but the truth at last became apparent. On a fine morning, a small cart-load of furniture, led by M. Bichonnet, and with Madame Bichonnet perched on the top of a very high bedstead, stopped at the door of the house opposite. As Madame Bichonnet nodded and smiled very benignantlly to her, there could be no doubt about it. On learning that Antoine had recommended the Bichonnets to his landlord, who was in want of porters, Mademoiselle Ursule was at first highly indignant. Rosine, however, succeeded in pacifying her, by mentioning their unhappy state, and reminding her that if Madame Bichonnet had not entertained a wholesome apprehension of sitting down to a table when there were thirteen persons present, they would never have become acquainted. As for Mademoiselle Miroiton, she

entered into a desperate rage on perceiving her ancient enemies once more in possession of their stronghold. She even sought out every opportunity of injuring them; but the porters had been taught by misfortune. They still occasionally gave parties, but avoided notoriety, and condescended to behave more politely to their lodgers. Ill-disposed persons asserted, however, that the new landlord's presence alone prevented M. Bichonnet from carrying on matters with as high a hand as formerly.

As for Madame Bichonnet, she was marvellously improved in health, and went about the house quite briskly, considering her delicate state — for she still spoke occasionally of her ailments, and indulged in dismal forebodings of not living beyond the spring; but, as Mademoiselle Ursule charitably observed, this was “through habit.” Misfortune had not, however, soured Madame Bichonnet's placid temper. She spoke kindly of every one, and never said anything worse of Mademoiselle Miroiton than that, “Poor thing! so, notwithstanding every effort she made, she could not get married after all. It grieves me to the heart; but indeed I always thought her too high-spirited for matrimony!”

We have dwelt somewhat lightly on the married life of Antoine and Rosine; but it is happy, and what more could be said? Mademoiselle Ursule, whose somewhat irritable temper they bear with the most praiseworthy patience, is still their best and most constant friend: they are thoroughly happy and prosperous, in the moral and worldly sense of the words.

The Bichonnets are still in their old lodge: they have left off a good deal of their selfish worldliness —

would we might say all! — and are quite cured of the temptation of match-making. For indeed, as M. Bichonnet loftily observes, it hardly becomes the dignity of a French porter to meddle in such affairs; and he very much doubts whether his duty to his fellow-men does not forbid it entirely. The last tidings we had of the Bichonnets declare that, on the 6th of January last, an enormous twelfth-cake was cut up in their lodge; the persons present were, besides the hosts, Antoine Tourneur, with his wife and two children, Mademoiselle Ursule, and the melancholy young man who sings the comic songs, and who declared, that though they were not yet thirteen, there was no knowing what might happen in time, winking as he spoke towards Madame Tourneur and the children; a joke which obtained much success, and is not yet forgotten in the neighbourhood. The same young man is said to have paid great attention to Mademoiselle Ursule. As she is resolved to remain single, this must be a calumny; and yet it may be true enough, for Mademoiselle Ursule herself was the person who originated the report. On the same evening M. Bichonnet also confidentially informed one of his guests — which, it is not known — that Louis Philippe had only a very short time to remain on the throne. He prudently refrained from saying how long, for fear the police might seek to involve him in some political conspiracy.

A COMEDY IN A COURT-YARD.

EVERY one knows that Paris is no longer what it was. It has been pulled down and rebuilt: every old street, every old nook and corner which antiquarian lore hallowed and worshipped, has been cleansed away from the face of the land. Broad clear streets lined with palaces have replaced the narrow, winding, and most picturesque street of old times, the street in which two carriages could not meet without creating an uproar, for it was impossible for either to pass unless the other retrograded, and which should give way was a battle to be long and obstinately fought; that street, in short, which no one who walked in it once ever forgot, has become a myth as we write.

Contemporary with the street was the archway that led into the court-yard. Both were well worthy of remark: the archway for its ancient well-worn carving, the court-yard for the epitome of human life it held within its walls; for the little world that, unconscious and careless of the great world around, moved and lived there. Such a court-yard there existed a few years ago in the very heart of Paris. There it may be still, but we confess that the chances against this are many: we assume its continued existence without warranting it.

This court-yard was ancient and gloomy; the

houses were tall and nigh; a glimpse of sky appeared between the lines of lofty roofs, and in the ever-open arch of the entrance was framed a quaint picture of an antique shop, with yards of red and white calico coming down from the second-floor and fluttering in the wind: besides this shop, which stood in the street, the inhabitants of the court-yard had the prospect of cabs, cars, and vehicles of every description, that met and came at a stand-still opposite the arch, and had their battles there something like twenty-five times and three-sevenths in the course of the day. The author of this accurate calculation was Monsieur Gant, an ancient public scrivener, the oldest inhabitant of the court-yard, and, beyond all doubt, the chief dignitary of the place.

Some thirty years before the opening of this narrative Monsieur Gant had entered a narrow, wooden mansion of venerable antiquity, and which, according to tradition, had belonged to three public scriveners before him. It stood high, like a Swiss chalet, so that torrents might flow underneath it and beat against its wooden walls in vain. It had wheels like the car of Juggernaut, and, as Monsieur Gant triumphantly said: "I can go where I like without stirring from my table: ay, I can actually be transported from one end of Paris to the other, for, like the snail, I bear my mansion with me!" But, to the honour of his magnanimity be it said, Monsieur Gant was never known to use this formidable privilege. No, not even to the length or the breadth of the court was his dwelling ever known to move. Satisfied with the knowledge of its power of locomotion, and indolent, perhaps, by nature, it stayed still, aided to this by the fact that a

team of four horses or the exertions of a dozen men alone could have set it stirring. Without examining, however, the causes of its tranquillity, the inhabitants of the court felt no alarm from its vicinity, and looked at the curling white smoke which rose steadily out of its solitary chimney with no more alarm than the Campanians of the last two thousand years have felt in gazing at the cloud which ever hangs over the sullen brow of Vesuvius.

Thus motionless and majestic Monsieur Gant's mansion stood in a shady corner of the court, near a stone fountain, half way between a washerwoman's tubs and an applewoman's stall. A faded curtain interposed its dusty texture betwixt M. Gant's window and the vulgar gaze, whilst, by a neatly-written bill, fixed with wafers to a pane of glass, the scrivener modestly informed the public of his readiness to indite or copy out epistles in the French language, at a very moderate price.

The personal appearance of M. Gant was by no means remarkable. He was a thin, withered little man, who looked as though he had formerly been much larger, but had since shrunk through some unaccountable process. His character was a strange compound of simplicity and punctilio. He had a great opinion of his own sagacity and depth, was vain of his little learning, and, by a whimsical contradiction, loved to think himself haughty and implacable, whilst he was in reality the most simple and easy of good-natured beings. During the daytime, M. Gant was to be found in his wooden box, waiting with exemplary patience for the arrival of customers, who seldom made their appearance, and conning over *La Grammaire des Gram-*

maires: for Monsieur Gant would have gone into fits if, even in settling a cook's accounts, he had committed one of those grammatical errors which the subtleties of the French language render it so difficult to avoid. It was the boast of his harmless life that his style was clear and his French correct.

In the evenings, when his box was locked up, Monsieur Gant entered one of the ancient houses that surrounded the court, climbed up five pair of stairs, opened the door of his cold and gloomy garret, and eat his solitary and frugal dinner. After this, Monsieur Gant emerged again, crossed the landing, and knocked at the opposite door. A deep bass voice cried out: "Qui vive?"

"Gant" was the heroic reply. Upon which the door would open and reveal Sergeant Huron on the threshold.

Sergeant Huron belonged to a race which all but vanished from France. There may be old men who fought as boys at Waterloo, but the old soldier of the Republic, who remembered its triumphs and its excesses, the old *routier* who could reckon up his campaigns on his fingers, who crossed the Alps and the Rhine, who saw the Pyramids with Napoleon, or survived the snows of Russia, is gone, or all but gone, as we write.

However, Sergeant Huron was not a solitary relic of the old Napoleonist soldier, at the time when he opened his door to Monsieur Gant, and welcomed him with a "How do you do, old boy?" uttered in stentorian tones, and a slap on the back that made Monsieur Gant shake again.

Sergeant Huron was six foot six; he had been a

grenadier, and he still wore a martial mustache, and a bonnet de police set of one side, and which made the boldest boys of the court-yard quake. It would have been difficult to declare why he was pleased to receive Monsieur Gant's visits, and why he was honoured with these visits by Monsieur Gant, but contrasts which are said to be indispensable in love may be as requisite in friendship. Certain it is, that though the scrivener was slow and pedantic in his speech, not to speak of the formality of his temper, that though Sergeant Huron's ideas and conversation never extended beyond Napoleon and his own exploits, and though his manners were neither polished nor refined, yet they agreed wonderfully well, met with pleasure, and were miserable when they spent one evening apart.

As usual, Monsieur Gant had taken his frugal meal, where against all culinary rules, there was more cheese than meat, he had locked up his room, crossed his landing, knocked at the opposite door, been hailed by the *Qui vive?* and answered "Gant;" as usual, he had got the slap on the back, and, sitting down by the open window, — it commanded a view of leads, cats, and flower-pots, — he was recovering his breath, when Sergeant Huron, drawing back two steps, exclaimed:

"Gant! what has happened?"

"Nothing, Captain, nothing," replied Monsieur Gant, with a wave of the hand.

"I tell you something has happened."

"Oh! nothing, — nothing. The old story; she has been at her tricks again."

Sergeant Huron twirled his mustache and looked fierce.

"She is a lady, and therefore is safe," he said ominously. "Her petticoat saves her. Otherwise —"

He broke off, leaving the rest to the imagination of Monsieur Gant; but curiosity, which is strong in man, proving strong, he soon resumed: "Come, Gant, what has happened?"

"This much," sententiously replied the scrivener, "she has insulted me with the vicinity of a cobbler; a vulgar cobbler, for what so vulgar as the smell of leather? It is her doing, I know it; but, as usual, I shall scorn to resent it."

"The cobbler does not wear a petticoat, at least," said Sergeant Huron, with a grim smile. "His apron need not prevent me from remonstrating mildly with him, and advising him still very mildly not to come to the court, or to remove from it with due haste!"

To this mild proposal Monsieur Gant, who knew of old that his friend was for carrying matters with a hasty military fashion of his own, returned a prudent denial, couching the motives of his refusal in a Latin quotation on the violence of warlike Mars, which Sergeant Huron, without understanding it, took as a personal compliment of the first water.

"Very well," he magnanimously said, "let the cobbler come; but remember that, should his behaviour prove exceptionable — I am there."

"I shall crush them all with contempt," loftily said Monsieur Gant.

From the preceding conversation we see that if the little scrivener had a friend, he also had that bane of life, an enemy. The individual which he and Sergeant Huron had referred to by the pronoun "she" was no other than the applewoman, whose stall stood in close

proximity to his box, most impertinently obstructing the passage to his door, and sometimes actually shutting him in. The mistress of the stall was a stout, fiery-faced little woman, with a thick, hoarse voice, which became startlingly shrill when she was at all excited, and bead-like eyes, beneath whose fixity of stare it was averred that M. Gant himself had quailed; although the truth is, that, being a dauntless little man, he cared not a pin for her. Why they were foes it would be hard to tell; yet they both felt that they were so; at least M. Gant, though incapable of the feeling, thought he hated the applewoman, who most cordially hated him. It would be tedious to relate by how many methods she sought to annoy the scrivener. But all her attacks proved unavailing: he did not even condescend to answer her most bitter taunts; he literally crushed her with the weight of his contempt.

The fact was that, owing to a certain philosophy, either constitutional or acquired, M. Gant could not be long teased by anything, and somehow or other the apple-woman's most artful contrivances to vex him generally added to his comfort or pleasure in the end. The persuading of a cobbler of her acquaintance to come and fix his abode in the court, exactly opposite the scrivener's box, was, however, the sorest blow she had as yet had the power to inflict. M. Gant, though he apparently remained indifferent to this attack, was in reality more annoyed than, for fear of any violence, he chose to show to his friend Sergeant Huron, and it was with a mixture of irritation and wrath that he awaited the event.

The cobbler's shed — which, as M. Gant indignantly declared, consisted of mud, wood, and plaster

— was erected in the space of a few days, and pronounced ready to receive its new tenants, who accordingly hastened to remove to it. This important event took place on a fine summer's morning, when M. Gant, who had just seated himself before his desk, could look on the whole proceedings. A small wheelbarrow or hand-cart, drawn by a man with a very black face, and followed by a woman blacker still, first made its appearance. A cradle, which was to be swung from the roof of the shed, a dirty board, destined to act as table, a couple of bottomless chairs, a saucepan, and a washing-tub, were successively taken out of the truck and placed in the shed; the care of the whole, besides that of the truck, at the bottom of which still remained some crockery, being confided to the cobbler's eldest son, a boy of seven or eight, whose parents, having more things to bring to their new abode, now left alone, with strong recommendations not to touch a certain pot of dripping, which it seems was also in the cart. It is well known what wonderful uses the French of the poorer classes make of dripping: in fact, they live upon it. They take it in the morning, diluted with warm water, under the name of soup; spread it, for lunch, on their bread instead of butter; eat it again as soup in the evening; and apply it to various other purposes with most praise-worthy ingenuity.

How it happened we will not venture to say; but when the cobbler and his wife came back, they found their eldest son in a singularly awkward position. The dripping-pot was a very deep narrow one — an earthen *marmite*, that did not look much unlike a helmet. Whether this resemblance struck the fancy of young Louis, or whether he was impelled by a natural taste

for dripping, would be difficult to determine; but certain it is that his parents found him sitting in the truck, and, to their unutterable dismay, with his head snugly ensconced in the dripping-pot. To see how it had got in was easy enough; but to say how it was likely to get out again was a more difficult task. The cobbler flew into a terrible passion; he bade Louis take his head out that very instant, and prepare for a sound whipping the next. The unfortunate Louis endeavoured to obey the first part of this injunction. His mother pulled at the pot, and he pulled, and all pulled; but it was of no use — off it would not come. The cobbler had promised his son a thrashing when the pot should be off; he now determined to give it him first, and wrathfully advanced to seize upon him; but hoodwinked as he was, Louis guessed his intention. He rapidly darted towards the top of the truck, which as suddenly flew to the ground: Louis lost his balance, and in a second down he rolled with the dripping-pot, and over him the truck with all its contents.

The scene that ensued — for the cobbler's other two children, who were now arrived, joined in the cry — no pen can describe: suffice it to say, that there was not a saucepan but was considerably damaged, nor a plate that was not broken. When picked up by his alarmed mother, Louis was found completely unshelled, very little injured, but somewhat scratched, and bedaubed with dripping to an extraordinary degree.

"I promised him a whipping, and a whipping he shall get," said the cobbler, whose wrath had only undergone a temporary lull. With his left hand he seized him, and raising the right he prepared to give

him a sound castigation, when an authoritative voice called out "stop." He turned round, and saw Monsieur Gant standing on the threshold of his mansion, stern and majestic.

"Stop! and why should I stop?" asked the cobbler, with surly republican independence.

"Because the boy has suffered enough for his low gormandizing," said Monsieur Gant, with an increase of majesty.

"And I say, let every man whip his own child," said the applewoman, who came tucking up her skirts, "and spare the rod and spoil the child," she added, sitting down at her stall.

The cobbler hesitated: but a piteous whine from Louis settled the matter. His paternal heart relented, and with a scowl he bade the lad be off, on which Louis shot past them all like an arrow, and Monsieur Gant, pleased with his victory, cast an eye of favour on the cobbler, and reëntered his mansion. He had derived a triumph from the very vicinity which his enemy had intended as an annoyance and an insult. In time he actually came to like that vicinity.

The cobbler was a merry industrious man, who sang and worked all the day long; whilst his wife, as industriously engaged, sewed, washed, and cooked — all in the shed — and accompanied her husband's strains by scolding her three unruly children. Still they were, upon the whole, a happy, good-humoured, and simple family, who won so much upon M. Gant's affections by the unbounded deference they paid him, that he began in time to like the cobbler's merry songs, the noise and romping of his children, and even the scolding of their mother. It was, besides, very

pleasant for a philosopher like him to watch daily the household concerns of the simple people of the shed, who with the greatest candour and *naïveté* laid open to his view every incident of joy or woe in their humble existence. He thus, unconsciously to them, and without ever having addressed them, became the partner of their little trials, and the unknown sharer of their mirth. He watched the children growing up, and the parents growing gray. A certain screaming baby, called Marianne, who had long annoyed him, became in time a pretty laughing child, and then a blushing maiden, on whom he loved to gaze; Louis of the dripping-pot assumed quite a manly air, and, owing to his cheerfulness and good-temper, was M. Gant's especial favourite; and thus the most formidable attempt which the applewoman had yet made against the scrivener's peace of mind, turned out like all the rest, and literally added to his pleasure and happiness. Seeing that he was really invulnerable, his enemy at last gave him a short respite, and, intrenched behind her stall, silently brooded over her defeat.

When Louis, who was now a journeyman carpenter, was somewhere in his twenty-second year, M. Gant began to observe what had been visible to all the inhabitants of the court for several years; namely, that the young man carried on a kind of sentimental flirtation with the washerwoman's daughter, Angélique, a girl of eighteen, very pretty, and very capricious, but withal very charming. It was a great source of pleasure to M. Gant to observe the progress of their simple courtship. At first Louis, when coming home from his work in the evening, would loiter at the fountain; and whilst the good housewives of the court, Angélique's

mother among the rest, were filling their buckets with water, and chatting together, he would address a few insignificant phrases to the young girl, and retire quite satisfied with her coy and monosyllabic answers. Gradually, however, he grew more bold and confident. Angélique had a pretty voice and a good ear, the result of which was, that she sang all the day long, to the scrivener's infinite gratification, and the apple-woman's consequent annoyance. With the view of indulging her taste, Louis brought her home all the songs he could procure; then he taught her the tunes; and at last he sang them with her in the cool summer evenings, until the whole court gathered around them; for, to say the truth, Louis never saw Angélique but on the threshold of her mother's door. Several months had thus elapsed, when, as the conclusion of the whole affair was evidently drawing near, M. Gant uneasily noticed certain symptoms of change in the demeanour of the lovers. One evening Louis, contrary to his usual custom, came not to the meeting: the next day Angélique received him with such evident coldness, that he retired earlier than usual. On the following evening Louis came home from his work somewhat later, and, without going near Angélique, paused for a few seconds at the fountain; on seeing him, she hastily entered her mother's house, and closed the door. The next day the young carpenter did not even approach the washerwoman's abode, though the scrivener caught a glimpse of him in the court. Several days elapsed, and yet there was no change on either side: the lovers only became cooler and cooler, until, at the end of a week, they seemed totally estranged.

M. Gant saw this, and grew sad: he had been

cheered a while by the sight of their simple courtship; he had loved to watch its progress evening after evening, and be the unseen witness of many little circumstances which had escaped the vulgar gaze; and now those in whom he had felt so deep an interest grew, like the world, indifferent and cold, taking from him one of his few pleasures. As usual, Monsieur Gant poured this sorrow into Sergeant Huron's friendly bosom.

"It is too bad," he said, lamenting; "these two children might be as happy as the day is long, and they will not — they will not. The perversity of human nature."

Sergeant Huron's mustache had grown white, but he twirled it as much as ever.

"Shall I interfere?" he suggested, "make all right in a few minutes, eh! You know how I manage."

"Thank you, thank you," replied Monsieur Gant, surprised at this considerate proposal, "lovers' quarrels are best left alone. Besides, I feel sure the apple-woman is at the bottom of it all."

This only whetted Sergeant Huron's eagerness to make the loves of Louis and Angélique all right, and all Monsieur Gant's eagerness and diplomacy were required to allay the old soldier's ardour, and make him relinquish this brilliant idea.

One evening, when M. Gant, who had grown quite misanthropic, was bitterly ruminating in the solitude of his wooden mansion, he was startled by a knock at his door. He opened, and Louis entered. The scrivener eyed him with silent surprise, whilst the young man, unconscious of the feeling he excited, laid on his desk a small slip of paper, briefly saying:

“Will you have the kindness to copy out and correct this, sir?”

Monsieur Gant stroked his chin, signed the young man to be seated, put on his spectacles, and read the paper attentively. It was a rude scrawl, in which the young carpenter had somewhat imperfectly attempted to express his feelings. Its incoherence did not, however, much astonish Monsieur Gant; for he was accustomed to love-letters, — we need scarcely say this was one, — but he paid more attention to its general purport. Louis, carefully avoiding to mention the name of Angélique — an act of prudence which made the scrivener smile inwardly — addressed her in the following style. Monsieur Gant thinking it proper to read this epistle aloud, we shall give it with his comments.

“‘mademoiselle’ — Humph! capital M wanted here — ‘you treat me with cruel coldness. I had such a headache last night I could scarcely sleep!’ — what about it? hum. ‘I have done nothing, nothing, Mademoiselle. Marianne knows it.’ — Knows nothing! I wonder how you make that out. What next? Ah! ‘I see you wish me to forget you. I shall do so; yes, I declare I will.

‘Your lover till I die,

‘LOUIS.’

“You will forget her,” said Monsieur Gant, with a supercilious look at the young man, who had heard him, red as fire, and evidently on thorns, “and yet you are her lover till you die. I do not understand. Please to enlighten me.”

“I beg, sir, that you will correct all mistakes,”

stammered Louis; "if I had known how to write a letter I would not have come to you."

"There is more logic in that than in this epistle," kindly said Monsieur Gant, and with a flourish of his pen he set about transcribing the love-letter.

Spite his criticisms, Monsieur Gant did not dream of altering it. He was a judge of the human heart, and he saw that the letter, with all its incoherence and its absurdity, was better than any he could write, for it was true. He therefore merely corrected the spelling as he transcribed it: when it was finished, he tossed it to Louis with a scornful "There, sir." The young man placed a franc on his desk, thanked him shortly, and retired.

"Ungrateful boy," muttered the scrivener, as the door closed on the young man. He felt aggrieved that one of the two beings whose fate had of late been his chief concern, should look upon him as a stranger. That his own lofty haughtiness made it impossible for either of the lovers to divine his secret sympathy, Monsieur Gant would never have acknowledged.

Still it is but fair to him to declare that this secret sympathy was in no wise diminished by the ingratitude of Angélique and Louis, and it was with the utmost impatience that he waited for the next evening, in order to see what effect the letter had produced.

The lovers met, seemingly by chance, as usual, near the stone fountain. Louis timidly approached the young girl, and whispered something in her ear; but she scornfully drew back, and, with a toss of her head, retired to her mother's shop. Louis looked sadly after her, still standing rooted to the same spot, until the stifled giggling of some mischievous girls near the

fountain aroused him from his trance. Suddenly starting, he cast an indignant glance around him, and hastened to depart, apparently much mortified by Angélique's contemptuous treatment.

"What could all this mean?" Such was the scrivener's thought, when the unexpected entrance into his lodge of a woman, wrapped up in a coarse dark shawl, awakened him from his reverie. He turned with surprise towards the new-comer; but notwithstanding her disguise, a glance was enough to let him know that Angélique stood before him. As soon as the door was closed upon her, she sat down, and without attempting to conceal her person any longer, she said in a lofty tone, that did not exactly suit her pretty little face:

"Monsieur Gant, I am come to request a favour from you. Yesterday I received this letter," and she laid Louis's epistle on the table, "from a person I detest."

"Detest!" echoed the scrivener.

"Yes, sir, detest," loftily repeated Angélique, "and with whom I wish to hold no further correspondence. May I beg of you to tell him so in my name?"

M. Gant took up his pen; a sheet of letter-paper was before him; he placed his hand upon it, as though to write; but laid it down again, and calmly said, "Why not tell him as much yourself, Mademoiselle? You see him every day."

"Because I do not wish to speak to him any more, sir," she sharply answered.

"Or perhaps you are unable to write yourself?" hinted the scrivener.

Angélique frowned, and looked displeased. "I know how to write, sir," she stiffly replied; "but since

he has chosen to apply to *you* to write to me, I shall answer him in the same manner."

"And who told you that it was I who wrote this letter?" asked M. Gant, turning inquiringly towards her; "for if you know that, *I* know that you were out yesterday."

Angélique coloured, but evasively answered, "Monsieur Gant, if you do not wish to write this letter, pray say so at once."

"No, no," said the scrivener, as she rose to depart, "since you are determined to be miserable, I shall no longer seek to prevent you."

And so saying, he once more took hold of his pen, and in a few brief words, as severe as Angélique could wish them to be, he intimated to poor Louis that the capricious beauty cared for neither his repentance nor for his most passionate protestations. When he had finished his task, M. Gant handed the letter to the young girl, watching her features, in the hope of seeing them betray some compunction for the severity of his expressions. But far from it: she seemed highly delighted with the epistle, thanked him very warmly, liberally remunerated him for his trouble, and left him sadder than ever, and in a bitter mood of invective against girls, their lovers, and human nature in general. "For," he observed, when he was left alone with his own thoughts, "it is easy to see how thoroughly bad human nature is, since those young people, who have known each other from their childhood, who have been lovers for years, now part for ever, not only without a pang, but even with joy; and, in all probability, owing to some mere trifle that has come between them."

Now, although he could not possibly imagine what this important trifle was, M. Gant had his own private suspicions concerning his spiteful little neighbour the applewoman, to whom he was indeed in the habit of referring every evil that occurred. It was evident that some mischievous person had informed Angélique of Louis's visit to him, a step not unlikely to prejudice him in her eyes; but then there existed no proof that this fact had been revealed to the young girl by the applewoman; and though he narrowly scanned her features more than once, M. Gant could discover in them none of the malicious triumph which generally betrayed her when she had been engaged on some work of mischief. She was apparently calm, and wholly unconscious of what was going on.

The next day passed, and nothing occurred, save that in the evening Louis came home from his work seemingly much disheartened, so that the scrivener, who was very fidgetty, and constantly on the look-out, concluded that he had received Angélique's letter. On the following morning, as he sat at an early hour in his box, he noticed Louis in a remote corner of the court engaged in a mysterious conference with his pretty sister Marianne. M. Gant easily guessed the subject of their conversation; and as Marianne was not only cheerful and good-tempered, but also possessed of much intuitive tact, and stood, moreover, on friendly terms with Angélique, he augured success from her interposition, and impatiently waited for its result. But Marianne was a real diplomatist; and instead of injudiciously hurrying to perform her delicate errand, she loitered about the court, now entering, now leaving her father's shed with a most unconcerned air. It was

not until the afternoon was far advanced that the scrivener saw her at length proceeding towards the washer-woman's shop. She could not have chosen a more unlucky moment; for Angélique, who was ironing in a little back parlour, was also there, entertaining a sentimental young tailor, laughing and chatting with him very merrily. Now this young man, who lived in the court, had formerly paid no little attention to Marianne, who, when teased on the subject, very seriously averred that "she did not care for him; indeed she did not!" Nevertheless, when she entered the parlour, and saw how thoroughly poor Louis was slighted, and for whom all her sisterly feelings were aroused, she felt so indignant at Angélique's coquetry, that she could scarcely contain herself. In short, she threw out such hints, that ere long the young tailor prudently departed; whilst Angélique, who was not very patient, retorted in so high a strain, that Marianne fairly lost her temper, and flounced out of the room in a state of great indignation. Though M. Gant saw nothing of this, he conjectured, by the young tailor's retreat, and Marianne's agitation, that the ambassadress had failed, a surmise which was confirmed by Louis's behaviour on the next morning; for as he was entering his wooden box, the young man followed him in.

"Monsieur Gant," said he, throwing a piece of paper on the table, "please to transcribe this."

'This' proved to be a very laconic epistle. 'Mademoiselle,' it said, 'you tell me to forget you. I will obey you as soon as I can. Farewell. Louis.'

"Now I call this sensible," said Monsieur Gant, with such deep and cutting irony, that Louis never

perceived its point. "As soon as you can! How judicious. Here is your letter, sir."

On the evening of the same day Angélique entered the scrivener's box, to dictate the following answer: "The sooner you forget me the better."

"Admirable!" cried Monsieur Gant. "I really do admire your spirit, Mademoiselle!"

Angélique gave him a quick, mistrustful look, but bowed and withdrew.

"And now," pettishly observed M. Gant, when she had retired, "I suppose that most absurd correspondence of theirs, by means of which they have contrived to keep me in hot water for the last week, is over at length."

But the scrivener evidently did not understand such matters; for although there was a kind of two days' truce, during which Louis went early to his work, and came home late, never once approaching the old stone fountain — near which Angélique openly flirted with the young tailor — it was evident, by the attitude of both parties, that things could not last long as they were. On the evening of the third day, Louis entered M. Gant's box in a state of great agitation.

"Monsieur Gant," he exclaimed, "this is more than human flesh and blood can endure, and you must tell her so!"

"Oh, you have not forgotten her yet?" ironically observed the scrivener.

But Louis cared not for irony: he was desperate; he had just caught a glimpse of Angélique seated in her mother's shop with his rival, and his overcharged heart poured itself forth in a torrent of eloquent reproaches, which he charged M. Gant to commit to

paper, never once reflecting that the scrivener could not possibly recollect as much as the one-tenth of what he was saying. M. Gant did not make the attempt; he let the young man speak away, conjecturing it would relieve him, and do him good; and in the meanwhile he cast a stern and angry glance towards the spot where Angélique was sitting with the tailor. To the scrivener's satisfaction, the young man rose to depart. Angélique tried to detain him; but he persisted in his resolution, and went away. Although she hummed a tune, and tried to look indifferent, Angélique could not conceal her vexation; and on hearing some remark made by one of the washerwomen, she left the shop in a pet, and walked out into the court. It was at this moment that Louis, who had seen nothing of all this by-play, reached the most pathetic part of his imaginary epistle, and eloquently reminded Angélique of their former attachment, once more begging to know how he had erred.

"Stop! here," cried Monsieur Gant, who had been anxiously watching his opportunity for the last two or three seconds, "stop! you can best tell her all this herself."

And before Louis could make any reply, he had partly opened his door, and calling on Angélique, who was just then passing before it, made her enter. It was not until she was in, and the door had been securely closed upon her by the considerate M. Gant, that the young girl became aware of Louis's presence. On seeing her lover, she started back and grew pale; but soon rallying, and casting a wrathful glance on the scrivener, she addressed Louis in an offended tone.

"Pray, sir, what is it so very particular you have to say to me here?"

"I assure you, Mademoiselle," stammered forth Louis, "I only came for a letter which Monsieur Gant —" He looked for the letter on the desk, but there was none.

"Yes," observed the scrivener in a tone of studied irony, "I was waiting till you should have done. As Mademoiselle is now here, you can tell her all you have to say. I have no doubt," he superciliously added, "it will spare me the trouble of writing down a good deal of nonsense:" and with a look of thorough contempt for all love-letters and love affairs, he took down *La Grammaire des Grammaires*, and became, to all appearance deeply, absorbed by its contents.

There was a long and awkward silence. Louis at length began speaking in an embarrassed tone: his words were incoherent and low; but warming with his subject, he gradually grew so eloquent and pathetic, that M. Gant thought it was not in the heart of mortal maiden to resist him. Angélique, however, not only appeared to hear Louis without emotion, but when he had concluded, inquired with freezing politeness, what else he had to say?

"Nothing," faintly answered Louis. Angélique turned towards the door: the scrivener saw it was time for him to interfere.

"Children, children!" he reproachfully exclaimed; "what is all this about? Who has come between your hearts and the love of so many years?" Angélique hung down her head, but remained silent.

"Nay," observed Louis, now fairly exasperated,

"let her alone, Monsieur Gant, since she will not be softened."

"And pray, sir," cried Angélique angrily, "who asks you to think of me at all?" Thus the scrivener's kind effort to effect a reconciliation between the lovers was on the point of embittering the quarrel; but by dint of coaxing, intreaties, and soothing words, he at last induced them to give him a patient hearing. This discourse, though somewhat long, was not very varied: he only spoke of their childhood and youth so happily spent in the court, of the pleasant evenings by the fountain, when Angélique sang, and Louis listened; yet he touched so many tender chords, and managed the matter so skillfully, that ere long Angélique drew forth a little white pocket-handkerchief, which she applied to her eyes, whilst Louis turned his head away, and pretended to look into the court. M. Gant immediately followed up his advantage, and in less than five minutes had effected an entire reconciliation between the two lovers, who, to say the truth, were not sorry for it.

"And now," said he, "that it is all over, you must tell me what you quarrelled about." This was, however, seemingly no easy matter to determine. Louis looked at Angélique, and Angélique at Louis; both were evidently in doubt on the subject. But M. Gant was a shrewd cross-questioner, and he soon elicited from Louis that he had long been secretly jealous of the young tailor, and that one evening when Angélique had provoked him by some unusual attention bestowed on his rival, he had spitefully declared a new purchase of hers odiously vulgar; an expression which, being uttered in the presence of several persons, the tailor

included, had so mortally offended Angélique, that she had instantly resolved to discard him for ever.

"And this," observed M. Gant, in a tone of great contempt, after hearing them out — "this was the cause of your quarrel?" Though somewhat abashed, they confessed it was. But the scrivener was not satisfied; he had his own ideas on the subject; and indeed it soon came out that the applewoman was at the bottom of it all. With her usual malice she had first diverted the young tailor's attention from Marianne to Angélique; then by dark hints excited poor Louis's jealousy; and at last persuaded Angélique that no woman of spirit ought to forgive the affront she had endured. In short, she had, like all mischievous persons, been so very industrious in her evil task, that M. Gant no longer wondered at the trouble the quarrel of the two lovers had given him.

After some further conversation, Louis and Angélique rose to depart, not, however, without hearing M. Gant, who addressed them in a little set speech, rather formal and pedantic, but nevertheless kind and sensible, showing them that the real cause of their quarrel had been the want of mutual trust and confidence. "And now, children," said he, as he concluded, "take an old man's advice — quarrel no more, and be ever more ready to believe good of one another than evil."

Promising to follow this advice, and once more warmly thanking him for his kindness, the lovers now left the scrivener to his own reflections. Scarcely were they gone, when M. Gant, who felt in a very undignified hurry to impart the news to Sergeant Huron, locked up his box before the usual time, and hastened to the abode of his trusty friend, who, listening to his

prolix narrative with profound gravity declared it was an admirable bit of campaigning, and that the scrivener had displayed the tactics of a general.

Although she was not at her stall when Louis and Angélique had their interview in the scrivener's abode, the applewoman had somehow or other obtained a knowledge of the fact. The next day she saw, as usual, M. Gant enter his box in the morning, but with the addition of a large parcel, which he carried under his arm; and a strange rumbling noise, as though M. Gant felt restless, and was walking to and fro in his mansion, followed his entrance; it, however, gradually subsided; and before long, he issued forth completely transformed, clad in a suit of rusty black, with a new hat and a white cravat. The applewoman's heart failed her: she had forebodings of a defeat. After carefully locking his door, M. Gant walked at a stately pace towards the washerwoman's shop. Whether by chance, or because she was aware of his visit, Angélique was out of the way. The scrivener gravely asked for her mother and found the good lady up to her eyes in soap-water. She looked upon him with some surprise, opened her eyes when he spoke of a private interview, inwardly wondered if he wanted to give her his custom, and wiping her hands and arms in a very wet apron, led the way into the small back parlour. Here M. Gant gravely expounded to her the nature of his errand, relating all concerning the attachment of Louis and Angélique, and, in the name of his young friend, asking for her sanction to their attachment. The washerwoman heard him, and was astonished. What could make Angélique wish to marry? She had always thought that if a woman washed, and ironed,

and worked hard, she had little time to think of marriage: so she had found since her husband's death. Nevertheless, she was not unreasonable, and declared that as Louis was a very honest, industrious young man, she should raise no objection to the match, if her daughter was bent upon it.

On the same evening, the whole matter was settled. In the presence of her mother, of Louis's parents, whom the young man had consulted long ago, and of M. Gant, Angélique was *accordée*, or granted to Louis, who presented her with a gold ring and a handsome pair of earrings. The marriage was fixed to take place at the end of a month. The young couple were to reside in the court; and, to her mother's satisfaction, it was agreed that Angélique should continue to work with her.

The applewoman was now fairly vanquished. Truth and M. Gant had triumphed: Louis and Angélique were reconciled: and even the young tailor proved penitent, and humbled himself to Marianne, who graciously received him once more into her favour. The scrivener's spiteful little enemy could bear this no longer; her heart was stung every day by some fresh insult; she declared that the court was in a league against her; and in order to be revenged on them all at once, she went off one morning with her stall and her apples, and doubtless settled in some very remote quarter, for she has never since been heard of. Some old cronies of hers, with whom she constantly quarrelled while in the court, soon missed her very much, for she was the great news monger of the place; and they threw out dark hints against the scrivener,

even averring that he had caused her to be spirited away.

M. Gant, who knew nothing of these vague rumours, bore his triumph with great moderation. Indeed, with his usual simplicity, he rather missed the applewoman, and certainly thought more of the happiness enjoyed by Louis and Angélique than of her defeat. When the wedding took place, he was the spirit of the whole party: he acted as Louis's witness at the civil contract, gave the bride away in the church, settled every doubtful point of etiquette, and with Sergeant Huron, who had been invited out of compliment to him, sang such witty songs after dinner, that everybody was charmed. The scrivener himself was astonished, and somewhat ashamed; he was even heard by his old friend wondering what had induced a philosopher like him to meddle in a silly love affair; but, to say the truth, he was quite delighted.

The married life of Louis and Angélique proved more happy than their courtship. They treasured up the words of their old friend, and acted towards each other with confidence and truth. M. Gant, whose infirmities increased with age, has been induced, not to abandon his box — nothing earthly could make him do that — but to take his meals with them, in return for which he most zealously teaches their children how to read and write, so that they will most probably be able in time to indite their own love-letters. Sergeant Huron is still alive, but, as the scrivener observes in a melancholy tone, growing rather weak-minded — a remark which the worthy sergeant sometimes applies in turn to his old friend. The cobbler has retired from business; the shed has been demolished, and a shop,

occupied by Louis's brother, erected where it once stood. Marianne is married to the young tailor. The washerwoman is as industrious as ever. We forgot mentioning that, as an instance of the diminished faculties of his friend, Sergeant Huron has informed Angélique that M. Gant is convinced the applewoman will soon make her reëpppearance in the court. This he believes on philosophical grounds, averring that he has been too long hacuourse

Sergeant Huron is above this learned nonsense; but he has also informed Angélique, from whom he can conceal nothing, that, after all, he should not wonder if it were to turn out true; for since his friend mentioned the subject, he has three times beheld in a dream the applewoman seated at her stall. But as six months have already passed away since then, it is somewhat doubtful if she will ever make her appearance.

THE TROUBLES OF A QUIET MAN.

CHAPTER I.

It is generally supposed that a quiet temper is conducive of a quiet life. But this is a great mistake, originating in that love of common place which seems inherent to human nature. No man could be quieter than Théophile Durand; few men, according to his own account, and he was strictly veracious, have passed through such tribulation as fell to his lot.

When they began no one knows. He has forgotten it himself, and when they will end it is impossible to divine. Out of this remarkable series we will make a few extracts, showing by what unmerited causes a quiet man became involved in trouble.

Théophile Durand was an employé, and the employé, or individual employed in any of the government offices, forms in France, or rather in Paris, part of a class distinct in itself, and different from anything of the same kind here. Every one in Paris knows the employé, his feelings, habits, and external signs. There is something stereotyped and utterly unmistakeable about the man. Method in matters of feeling, and sobriety of demeanour, are his two grand characteristics throughout life.

To this peaceable and timid class belonged Théo-

phile Durand, the gentlest of gentle employés. Never did the innocent passion of caligraphy burn with purer flame than in his harmless bosom. To transcribe in fair and legible characters whatever his chef set before him, was the glory and triumph of Théophile. Twenty years of his life were devoted to this important occupation; from nine in the morning until five in the afternoon he assiduously bent over the official desk, and longed for no wider horizon than that of the dull court yard of the government office. He was not promoted in rank, nor did he receive any increase of emolument, but he was not an ambitious man; his wants were few, and none ever heard him complain, for in his office as yet trouble had not overtaken him.

This happy existence was at length disturbed by the introduction of a new desk and stool in the quiet bureau, where for years no stranger had appeared. The owner of these portentous signs added to Monsieur Théophile Durand's sense of dismay by his unofficial appearance; he was a very young man, with something resembling a moustache struggling into existence above his upper lip. He had a thin, sallow, and melancholy, not to say morose-looking, face, and a slender drooping figure. All that Monsieur Théophile could ascertain of him was, that he rejoiced in the name of Auguste Tondu, and entered the office as *surnuméraire*; that is to say that he belonged to the class of unpaid employés, condemned to wait for their salary until death or promotion shall make some place vacant in the ranks of their companions.

The desk of the *surnuméraire* faced that of Théophile, to stare at whom seemed from the very first

day his chief task and occupation. He did, indeed, occasionally vary it by sucking and nibbling every pen that came in his way, or by making little balls of the official paper, which he entertained himself by masticating, and, to all appearance, by swallowing; but beyond this he did nothing.

The presence of this idle and enigmatical individual, whom he vainly endeavoured to draw into occasional discourse, awed and annoyed Théophile Durand. If ever he looked up from his desk it was to see Auguste Tondu sucking a pen and looking at him intently. This happened so often, that at length Théophile resolved to look up no more; but this only rendered matters worse, as he had a ceaseless consciousness that the surnuméraire's eye never left him; a fact of which he became firmly convinced, when once raising his eyes by chance, he met the same dull and apparently eternal glance fastened on him still. From that moment Théophile resigned himself to the decrees of fate. He felt a trouble at hand.

Six months had passed away. Time had tended to weaken those first unpleasant impressions, and Théophile had grown accustomed to the presence of Auguste Tondu. One afternoon, as the clock struck five, he rose as usual from his stool, wiped his pen, put away his papers, slowly pulled off the black glazed calico sleeves destined to protect the cloth of his coat, and was stretching out his hand towards his hat, when a sepulchral voice said:

"Monsieur Durand, will you be good enough to tell me how long this is to last?"

It was Auguste Tondu, the only employé besides Monsieur Durand remaining in the office, who had

spoken. Théophile remained mute. He was in too great a state of surprise at the unexpected query to think of answering it.

"Sir," disdainfully resumed the young man, "I perceive you are dull of apprehension. My meaning is this. I have been deluded into the acceptance of this place of surnuméraire under the impression that you would speedily die or get promoted; but, sir, you are doing neither one thing nor the other. I have waited six months: my patience is exhausted, and I want to know how long this is going to last?"

"Sir," rather agitatedly replied Théophile, "you wish to know more than I can tell. If my chef is willing to promote me I am quite willing to be promoted, that is all I can say."

"And you know nothing about the other thing?"

"No, sir, I do not."

"Upon your word, sir?" continued Auguste, with a suspicious look, that implied he thought Monsieur Théophile better informed on this subject than he chose to confess.

"Upon my word, sir, I know nothing about it; and I may add, sir, that I am not at all inquisitive; I really have no wish to know."

"Well, sir," resumed Auguste, with an oblique look, "you are on your guard; you know that you stand in my way — enough."

Monsieur Théophile uneasily inquired into the exact nature of his meaning, but the only reply he received was the enigmatic "enough," sententiously repeated. He was going to retire in a most anxious foreboding state of mind, when Auguste exclaimed with something like pathos:

"Sir, listen to me, I beseech you. I must unburthen my mind to some one. I have conceived a particular affection for you. Again I say, hear me!"

Why did the tender-hearted Théophile listen to this insidious prayer? but there was the mischief: he must needs be kind and obliging.

Auguste continued:

"You behold in me the victim of circumstances; a wretched, yes, sir, a thoroughly wretched man."

He did look very desperate as he pursued: "Life is dull, sir, dreadfully dull. I want excitement, genuine excitement. It is a want of my nature; but I cannot get it, and no one will help me to it. Will you?"

"Sir, be pleased to particularize," gravely replied Théophile, "and I shall see what I can do."

"Sir, you can do nothing; I have been placed here by a perfidious uncle of mine, who declared you were going to die or be promoted. Accordingly I find this place narrow. Indeed the whole world is narrow. I have sought, I may say that I have hunted, for the ideal, and never found it. Life is prose, sir, from the beginning to the end of the chapter."

Monsieur Théophile smiled: he began to understand his companion.

"You want excitement," he said, still smiling; "get married, my friend, get married."

Monsieur Tondu seemed to think the remedy a desperate one indeed, for he growled something or other, and looked suspicious.

"Why did you not marry?" he asked.

"Because I do not like excitement," was the composed reply.

"Are you sent by my uncle?" asked Tondu, still suspicious.

Monsieur Durand replied that he had not the honour of knowing Monsieur Tondu's uncle.

"Well, I do not object to marriage by way of change," said Monsieur Tondu; "indeed I feel that to be loved by a lovely woman would calm me down. I have a handsome fortune of my own, which my uncle cannot keep from me, and I do not care about a dot. No, a beautiful, adoring creature, young and accomplished, is all I want."

"How would you like her to be?" asked Monsieur Durand, "dark or fair?"

"Fair, fair!" exclaimed Monsieur Tondu, with a vivacity that scouted the mere idea of raven locks. "Fair, but by no means red!"

"Blue eyes?" suggested Théophile.

"Ah! heavenly blue!" ejaculated Auguste, "celestial colour!"

"A fair complexion?"

"Lilies and roses!"

"A sweet temper?"

"A sweet temper!" repeated Auguste, "Monsieur Durand, when shall I see her?"

"Softly, softly," said Monsieur Durand, nodding, "I must speak to her mother first, and to her."

"Tell her I adore her already," enthusiastically exclaimed the young man; "tell her —"

"Softly, softly, you are not of age. May I know if you are free to marry as you choose?"

"I have ten thousand francs a year, and I shall be twenty-five next month," composedly replied Monsieur

Tondu; "only let me see this angel — what is her name?"

"Virginie."

"Only let me see Virginie then, and everything is well."

"You cannot see Virginie before a week," replied Monsieur Durand; "in the mean while I trust you will be silent."

"As the grave," was the solemn reply, and on that understanding they parted.

"He looks rather young for Virginie," thought Monsieur Durand, as he walked home, "but ten thousand francs a year will make him seem lovely. It is plain, too, that he will make my cousin happy, but prudence, common prudence, requires that I should make a few inquiries before we proceed in this matter,"

Monsieur Durand loved plain dealing in all things. Nothing plainer and more straight-forward now occurred to him than to step round to M. Tondu, senior, and sound him concerning the worldly prospects of his imaginative nephew.

Monsieur Tondu the elder was a very old gentleman, who lived in an old house, and whom Monsieur Durand found sneezing and coughing by the fire-side. He wore a green shade to protect his eyes, and sat with his hands on his knees. From beneath his shade he peered at Monsieur Durand, and feebly inquired into his errand.

"I am come," began Monsieur Durand, with a mysterious air.

"Sir," interrupted the old gentleman, with a cautious forefinger, "sir, take care. I can stand no emotion, no agitation."

"I trust neither to move nor to agitate you," replied Monsieur Durand. "I am come —"

"Does it relate to money?" interrupted the old gentleman; "I warn you that I neither give nor lend."

"I never ask or borrow," replied Théophile, with great dignity; "please to hear me."

This seemed no easy matter to obtain; for first of all the old gentleman felt sure that there was a draught, then that the chimney smoked, and it was only when Théophile was rising in despair, that the old gentleman said pettishly: "Really, sir, this is very strange. I think you have been here quite long enough to let me know your errand."

"Sir," began Théophile, sitting down, and peering mysteriously into the old gentleman's face, "you have a nephew."

Here a very red-haired lady of some thirty odd years, whom Monsieur Durand had not noticed before, looked from the window where she sat working, and said in rather a masculine voice:

"Well, sir, what if my father has a nephew? are you too come to abuse the poor boy?"

"Oh, her! not a very good character, I fear!" thought Monsieur Durand, "I did well to come." But, though he inwardly congratulated himself on his shrewdness, he declared aloud that he came not to breed family strife, or report evil of the youthful Tondu.

"I only came," he added blandly, "to inquire into a few particulars, such as his age, and the precise epoch when he is to begin and enjoy those ten thousand francs a year."

"Sir, you are very indiscreet," said the redhaired

lady, rising as if to leave the room; "my cousin's age and income are no business of yours."

"Sir," said the old gentleman, raising a shaking forefinger, "if that boy has signed bills they are so much waste paper: his debts I will never pay, and he is only a child of nineteen according to law."

"Nineteen!" exclaimed Monsieur Durand, "he told me he was twenty-five, and that he was coming in to ten thousand francs a year next month."

"Outrageous, indelicate!" exclaimed the red-haired lady, who darted angry looks at her father. "You ought not to be answered, sir." But not heeding her, the old gentleman pursued:

"He is nineteen, sir; a lazy, good-for-nothing boy, whom I keep out of charity, who has not a sou of his own. If he owes you money, sir, you may bid adieu to it: you will never get it."

"He owes me nothing," impatiently replied Monsieur Durand; "I only want to know when he comes in to those ten thousand francs a year."

"And I insist on knowing your motive for making that extraordinary inquiry," said the lady, with something like majesty.

"Yes," said the old gentleman, "we want to know."

Looking as dignified as either of them Théophile began:

"Monsieur Auguste Tondu, having expressed to me the want of excitement under which he labours, I advised him to marry."

"Very good advice," said the lady.

"He assured me he did not care for money: he only wanted beauty and love."

The lady nodded.

"I accordingly proposed my cousin Virginie Martin."

"Go on, sir," said the lady.

"A beautiful girl, with whom he fell in love on my description."

"Go on."

"For she is fair, not red, and very charming."

"Go on, sir."

"I am going on," said Théophile, a little impatient at this needless spurring, "they are to meet in a week; to meet will be to love, but Virginie has no money, and I wish to know the truth of Monsieur Tondu's assertion: is he to enter next month on ten thousand francs a year?"

"Go on," grimly said the lady.

"I will not," indignantly replied Théophile; "I have said all I had to say."

"Sir, I warned you not to agitate me," exclaimed the old gentleman, and throwing himself back in his chair, he fell into a fit. The lady screamed, and instead of rushing to her father went into violent hysterics.

All presence of mind forsook Monsieur Durand. Instead of assisting his victims, he flew to the door, flew down the staircase, and flew along the street, to the confusion and amazement of all quiet passengers.

We will not describe Monsieur Durand's state of mind. He felt, he knew that he had committed some dreadful mistake, he dreaded meeting the deceitful Tondu, who had led him into all this trouble, and yet meet him he must. Carefully, when that individual entered, did he glance up from his desk, anxiously did

he endeavour to read in his face the story of the preceding day's adventure.

Auguste Tondu's face was black as night, but as he gave him, Théophile, no particular share of attention, our friend concluded that, so far as he was concerned, all was right.

He was congratulating himself on his escape, and preparing to depart as four struck, when, with upraised hand, Monsieur Tondu said: "Stop!"

"Stop!" he repeated, "I have something to say to you."

"Tell it to me as we go along," suggested Monsieur Durand, managing to reach the door.

"Right, I shall go home with you," replied Auguste Tondu, taking his arm.

There was no help for it, so Monsieur Durand submitted. As they walked together, Monsieur Tondu said significantly:

"Have you ever had an enemy? No. Well I was scarcely born when my enemy began. He is my own cousin, much older than myself, and a monster. We had not heard of him for a long time, but yesterday he appeared again — but first let me explain a few matters. I have been reared by a benevolent uncle, whom I revere, and I am to marry his daughter, a beautiful young creature, whom I doat on, and who has ten thousand francs a year of her own — you understand?"

"Quite," replied Théophile Durand, "your cousin is the lady I saw yesterday, and who —"

"You never saw her," interrupted Monsieur Tondu, with some sternness, "neither say nor think so. Do not speak: let me go on. Well, sir, my cousin, after

being a long time invisible, appeared again yesterday. To my revered uncle he painted me in the most odious colours: as a spendthrift, in short, as a wretch: to my adored cousin, he spoke of me as a faithless lover, speculating on her fortune to marry another woman. In short, sir, the monster did not leave the house until my uncle was in a fit and my cousin in hysterics. On returning home I found them in that pitiable condition. Well, sir, what do you think of having an enemy?"

Monsieur Durand was a quiet man. "Sir," he said dubiously, "how do you know it was your cousin worked all this mischief?"

With the utmost composure Auguste Tondu replied: "He took an assumed name, something like Bertrand le Grand, but my cousin, who has wonderful perspicacity, recognised him from the first. We have given a description of him to the Commissaire de Police, and he informed us this morning that he is on the track."

"Sir," said Monsieur Durand, with great dignity, "I scorn the falsehood. I will not betray you, but I scorn the falsehood."

A fierce and malignant look was Auguste Tondu's reply. "You wish for war," he said ominously. "Well, then, war you shall have."

Here Théophile's heart failed him. He remembered the manifold opportunities his enemy would possess of annoying him. He already felt pins in his stool, and saw blotches of ink on his fair-written sheets. His proud spirit gave in.

"Well, sir," he said desperately, "I yield, yes, sir. Your male cousin is a wretch, and your female cousin an angel."

"Whom you have never seen," suggested Auguste.

"Never," said Théophile, who soothed his conscience with the gentle equivocation that the red-haired lady who said "go on" was not at all like an angel.

Thus ended this trouble! with peace, it is true, but with peace bought on such ignominious terms, that they rankled in Théophile's mind. He could not endure the sight of Auguste Tondu; he could not meet with patience that deceiver's impudent look; in short, he could have no peace of mind until, on his own request, he was transferred to another room. Here he breathed freely and felt happy, until he made some bitter discoveries, not the least irritating of which was, that his new stool was in a constant and refreshing draught. The other annoyances he had to bear, such as the employé's conspiring not to let him see the newspaper, or uniting in an amiable plot to exclude from him the heat of the stove in winter, he thought little of: they were the result of that trouble to which, from the name of its originator, he gave the name of Tondu. "My Tondu trouble" he called it in that private autography which, like every human being, he daily wrote for his own perusal, on the broad sheets of memory.

CHAPTER II.

THE second trouble of the quiet man, second on our list, hundredth on his, was even more formidable than that which we have related, and ought to be a warning to all quiet, prudent persons.

Monsieur Durand had a cousin, a widowed lady, named Madame Martin, who had a daughter named Virginie, whom Monsieur Durand was extremely anxious to

see fairly married; perhaps because her mother dropped such strange pertinacious hints, that he could not possibly misunderstand their meaning: she wanted him to marry Virginie. Now though Virginie was amiable, good, and pretty, Monsieur Durand loved celibacy too tenderly to think of relinquishing her company for that of mortal woman, and he hunted out husbands with a praiseworthy pertinacity, that endeared him to the mother, and made him thoroughly odious to the daughter.

His cousin, Madame Martin, a thin and sharp little woman, resided in one of the quiet Paris streets, one of those streets where the houses have shady gardens, full of lilacs and laburnums; streets daily becoming more scarce. Opposite her resided, in one of those embowered houses, her friend Madame Legrand, a comfortable woman in every sense of the word, who now and then had a superfluous floor to let.

Neither in person nor in circumstances were the two friends alike; but they had one point of resemblance, they were both "women of the world." At least they said so, to each other especially.

If Madame Legrand gave a cosy little dinner to a quiet little circle of friends, and if instead of asking Madame Martin and her pretty daughter Virginie, she asked the two cross, but rich, old maids opposite, she was the first to tell her friend of it, with the following engaging frankness:

"You see, my dear Madame Martin, I would much sooner have had you and that dear little Virginie, but what can one do? those two old creatures are always loading me with preserves; it was only last week they sent me a bottle of noyau, and another of ratafia; and

then, my dear Madame Martin, though I do not care one pin about them, yet I am an old woman of the world — that's the truth of it."

Far from being or showing herself offended, Madame Martin admired her friend, and approved her warmly. "Quite right," she replied with emphatic nod and tone, "quite right; that, and no other, was the way to get on through life. She was an old woman of the world herself, and would have done just the same. Invite her and Virginie! why so? What was there to gain by them she should like to know? No, no, ask the donors of preserves, noyau, and ratafia by all means."

Thanks to this philosophic indulgence, the two ladies went on wonderfully well. It is true that occasionally — not more than five or six times a year — Madame Martin would lay various little plots and schemes, rather tending to injure the comforts or interests of Madame Legrand; to deprive her of a good dinner, or prevent her furnished apartment from being let, but even when the said plots and schemes were brought home to her in the most evident manner, she scorned to look disconcerted.

"She was an old woman of the world," she said, triumphantly. This explained everything.

These two excellent friends had, however, set their heart on a common object: the marriage of Virginie Martin with some individual, no matter who, rich and high enough to become the husband of a pretty and charming girl. That Madame Martin, who had only a very slender annuity, should wish to get her daughter advantageously married was natural enough, but that an old experienced woman of the world, like Madame

Legrand, should trouble herself about the marriage of any girl, however charming, might seem strange, but for the following reasons.

Madame Legrand was something of an epicure, and she liked a wedding dinner; then she also liked a handsome present, and every one knows, or ought to know, that the persons who help to tie the knot of a French marriage invariably receive a cadeau proportionate to the value of the bargain; for a bargain it is in every sense of the word.

But notwithstanding the zeal of the two ladies, Virginie remained unmarried. In vain had the unhappy girl been actually offered — for it was no less — to every marriageable man in the vicinity, for the last three years; she was still Virginie Martin, and yet she was pretty, and, as we already said, very charming.

Madame Martin was beginning to despair, and Madame Legrand had prophetically exclaimed that she should never partake of Virginie's wedding dinner, when the former lady made an unexpected discovery, which resuscitated her dying hopes, and filled her maternal heart with joy.

"Madame Legrand," said she, entering her friend's little parlour one afternoon, and addressing the other lady, who was taking her after-dinner repose near the open window, "Madame Legrand, we have been acquainted these twenty years; we are both old women of the world, and so what is the use of finessing with one another? I might say I called here to see how you were after your bad cold, but I shall do no such thing; no, my good Madame Legrand, I called to tell you I am coming to dine to-morrow with you; Virginie, of course, accompanies me. What do you think

of that?" She folded her arms, and drew herself up with a triumphant air. Madame Legrand coughed a reserved alarmed cough, and held herself on the defensive. Her friend smiled and quietly continued:

"I have already ordered a leg of mutton, and seen about the poultry and the dessert. But it shall be a very plain meal—extremely so. One must not overdo the thing, Madame Legrand."

Madame Legrand took an evasive half-dignified air. She did not exactly understand her friend. She was very dull of apprehension sometimes. Might she know exactly what Madame Martin meant? Madame Martin nodded; confessed the request was reasonable, drew her chair nearer to that of her friend, took a confidential attitude, and whispered very significantly:

"You see that gentleman walking in your little garden, do you not?"

"Yes, I see Monsieur Edouard Lefèvre, my lodger."

"Then you behold a most unhappy man. Look at him, is there not grief, yes, deep grief, written on that face?"

"Well, he does not look merry; but what about it?"

"Merry! I should like to know how a man who has lost two hundred thousand francs a year could look merry?"

Madame Legrand opened her eyes. Her friend smiled with the consciousness of superior knowledge, and laconically informed her that the simple unassuming man, who had been lodging with her for the last week, was no other than the rich Edouard Lefèvre from Lyons; that unhappy merchant who had recently lost in railroads the heavy sum above mentioned.

"I had it all from my cousin, Théophile Durand," she added, "who had it all from M. Lefèvre's aunt, and who took a fiacre to come and tell me that the unhappy man was here in your house endeavouring to calm his mind."

"But what has all this to do with to-morrow's dinner?" asked Madame Legrand, without losing sight of the original question.

"My dear friend, that unhappy man needs society; it will cheer him."

Madame Legrand looked sceptical. "Well, it really is no use to feign with an old woman of the world like you," said Madame Martin, with philosophic candour, "the fact is, I want him to see Virginie."

"But if he is bankrupt! A propos, I hope he will pay me!"

"Be quite easy," replied Madame Martin, with a sagacious smile, "it is quite true he has lost two hundred thousand francs income — but then he has thirty thousand francs a year left. His aunt said so."

"I would not trust his aunt if I were you," said Madame Legrand, looking uneasy; "indeed, now that I know this I mean to ask him to pay in advance; ay, and this evening too."

Madame Martin was greatly alarmed; it required all her eloquence and tact to persuade her friend that Monsieur Lefèvre had really a handsome fortune left, but she at length succeeded; and, a much easier task, she convinced her that it was highly proper to give him a dinner at her, Madame Martin's, expense, in order to cheer him in his solitude.

"Virginie, do you mean to dress to-day?" dryly

said Madame Martin to her daughter on the afternoon of the following day.

The young girl did not answer. She sat near the table, her brow resting on her folded hands; her whole attitude sad, listless, and drooping.

"Come, make haste," urged her mother, "look at your dress! how nice it is!"

The young girl slowly raised her glance. She was a pretty, elegant blonde, with soft blue eyes and delicate features; but her look was troubled, and her face was pale. She gave a distressed look at the clear white muslin robe her mother displayed with evident complacency, then resumed her old attitude, and wept bitterly. The poor girl knew that dress well, far too well. To her it was the symbol of degradation, mortification, and shame. Whenever a new star dawned on the matrimonial horizon, Virginie Martin had to put on the clear white muslin — nothing became her so well — and display to the best advantage whatever attractions nature had given her. Her whole soul revolted against this, but her mother was inflexible, and poor Virginie was gentle and pretty — she always yielded. On the present occasion she proved more than usually rebellious.

"I cannot and I will not," she passionately cried, "Heaven help me! is there nothing I can do? let me be a milliner, a dressmaker, anything you like, but let me earn my bread, and not do such things." Broken sobs impeded her utterance.

"A milliner, a dressmaker!" exclaimed Madame Martin, with sorrowful indignation, "and it is my daughter, Virginie Martin, who has such ideas, such sentiments! For shame!"

"I am not ashamed of them," replied the young girl, looking up with flushed cheek and kindling glance, "but I am ashamed whenever I put on that abominable dress."

"An exquisite white muslin, emblem of virgin innocence, and youthful freshness, and transparency of feeling; she calls it abominable!"

"Yes, abominable! for whenever I have put it on it has been to see myself offered to some man or other. Good heavens! the thought of it makes me feel hot! When will women cease to be so cheap?"

"When they have money," philosophically replied the old woman of the world; "I am really ashamed of your ignorance, Virginie; my daughter not to know better! As to your being 'offered,' as you choose to call it, I do not see how it can be helped, whilst men are what they are. Entre nous, my dear, men are regular Turks, and every man thinks himself a Sultan at the very least. They like to have women offered to them, and to pick and choose. My dear, let them; *we* get the best of it in the end, and, as the old proverb says: those who laugh last laugh best. So put on your dress, and look as pretty as you can."

A fresh burst of tears was the only reply this maternal exhortation received.

"That is it!" indignantly exclaimed Madame Martin, "cry, redden your eyes, make yourself look pale, ill, and sulky, as you always do on those occasions; no wonder the men will not have so wan and lachrymose a creature! Come, do you mean to put on that dress?"

Virginie shook her head. "She could not," she said, "she felt she could not." Madame Martin was

too old a woman of the world not to know the value of a little pathos now and then. She therefore burst into tears, and lamented her fate in pathetic accents. "She had a daughter, and had reared her up for this! She had done everything to get her married, was it her fault if men were not willing? She had carried her maternal devotion to the point of laying out twenty francs — it would not come to less — for a dinner to be given by Madame Legrand, in order that Virginie might meet Monsieur Lefèvre, and now Virginie would not go, and her money was thrown away, and she was a most unhappy mother!"

Virginie resisted a while longer, but at length this matter ended, as usual, by her putting on the white muslin, and agreeing to accompany her mother.

On entering the little parlour of Madame Legrand, Madame Martin was struck with dismay to perceive two ladies, one young, and a very pretty brunette, already seated there. Madame Legrand apologetically whispered that her sister-in-law and niece having unexpectedly called upon her, she could not, of course, do less than ask them to dinner, but then, of course, she would divide the expenses with her friend.

Madame Martin was too old a woman of the world to believe a word of this. The sister-in-law and niece resided ten leagues away, they called twice a year on Madame Legrand; never more; they had evidently been summoned post haste, lest such a prize should go out of the family. It was as clear as noonday. Even for an old woman of the world this was rather hard to bear, and then, to make matters worse, this perfidious Madame Legrand had made the young girls sit side by side. How could the pale inanimate Virginie stand a

comparison with the brilliant bloom and engaging vivacity of her rival? Madame Martin internally gave it up, and waited with the resignation of despair for the entrance of Monsieur Lefèvre. But Monsieur Lefèvre did not come. "A sudden fit of indisposition deprived him of the pleasure of dining with the ladies."

Madame Legrand looked disconcerted; her niece pouted; Madame Martin triumphed, and Virginie looked enchanted and charming. Relieved from the dreadful apprehension of meeting the stranger, she became so gay and pretty, that Madame Martin sighed to think how very provoking it was in her never to look so at the proper times. She gave her a good lecture on the subject in the garden, whither they all repaired after dinner. Madame Legrand, her sister-in-law, and niece, held a consultation apart, whilst Madame Martin and Virginie were unceremoniously left to their own society.

"Virginie," pathetically said the maman, "do you wish to break my heart?"

"Is it my fault, maman, if Monsieur Lefèvre was ill?"

"But if he had come, good gracious, if he had come! Why, when the door opened once, you sank back on your seat white and trembling. For heaven's sake — I hope you feel better, sir," she suddenly added, in a soft, insinuating voice.

Virginie looked up, and perceived a serious-looking man of thirty or so standing near them. He paused on being thus addressed, and though not without a keen look of surprise at the elder lady, he politely thanked her, and said that he felt much better indeed.

He looked inclined to walk on, but Madame Martin was not going to let him escape thus; she gently compelled Virginie to resume the place by her side which the young girl had shrinkingly left. The path was narrow, Monsieur Lefèvre could not attempt to move on without evident rudeness; he did not seek to do so, but whilst Madame Martin assailed him with a torrent of fluent speech, he looked at her daughter with much attention. Evening was closing in, but they stood face to face within a few paces of each other: he could see her well. Virginie was not pale now; she was crimson; indeed her agitation was so evident, that it was that, much more than her beauty, which attracted the gentleman's attention. He asked himself with some wonder what there was in his presence to produce such emotion, and if all Parisian girls were so. He was not left long in doubt, for Madame Martin having imprudently raised her voice, the sound reached the ears of Madame Legrand, who rushed panting to the rescue with her blooming, smiling niece. Monsieur Lefèvre looked annoyed, but he was now fairly surrounded; there was no help for it. He submitted with tolerable composure; walked up and down the garden with the ladies, and probably begun to understand something of what was going on, for, as he saw Madame Legrand bring forward her niece on every occasion, and Madame Martin pertinaciously offer poor Virginie to his notice, a scarcely perceptible, though sarcastic, smile appeared once or twice on his pale firm lips.

"I think we had better go in," at length kindly said Madame Legrand, who perceived with some alarm that her guest looked rather more at the pale Virginie than at her brilliant niece, "that dear Virginie is so

delicate that the night air might affect her; indeed she looks very pale as it is!"

Madame Martin indignantly begged to inform her friend that the health of Virginie was excellent. Virginie had never been ill since she had the measles.

"Which must have been a good while ago," charitably said Madame Legrand.

Madame Martin scorned to answer the calumny. It refuted itself, or rather Virginie's youthful face refuted it completely.

They went in; Madame Legrand asked her niece to sing, and Mademoiselle unhesitatingly attacked a magnificent solo, in which she introduced a few superfluous ornaments, that did very well indeed.

"I believe Mademoiselle Martin does not sing?" kindly said Madame Legrand.

"Yes she does," shortly replied her indignant mother.

Virginie gave her a look of terror. She never had sung in company in her life, and knew nothing of music. But her mother was roused and pitiless. She led her to the piano, and stood by her side to encourage her, and, if needs were, to enforce obedience. Virginie made an attempt, but her voice broke down almost immediately. "There, you have finished it now," savagely whispered her mother, hurrying her out of the room amidst the ill-repressed titter of the Legrands.

It certainly did not appear that M. Théophile Durand had any particular share in the disasters of this day, save as the originator of the campaign which ended in such signal defeat. But this proved enough, and more than enough, for mother and daughter. Virginie scarcely reached home when she threw herself

into a chair, burst into tears, and exclaimed: "I detest Monsieur Durand."

"A mean, spiritless fellow to allow his female relatives to be insulted in that way!" cried Madame Martin in an excited tone; "but he shall see, he shall see!" She resumed her bonnet and shawl, which she had put away, and left the room without any other word.

Monsieur Théophile Durand was in his first nap, when he was roused by a violent ringing and knocking at his room door; for his apartment consisted of one chamber and a closet. He sat up in bed and listened, slyly feigning deafness. The ringing was violently repeated, and accompanied by something so like the kick of a shoe, that Monsieur Durand wrathfully cried out:

"Who is there?"

"Open, sir!" indignantly exclaimed the shrill voice of Madame Martin.

Monsieur Durand chuckled with glee, to think that he had so good an excuse not to admit his cousin.

"My dear relative," he sweetly replied, "I should be charmed, delighted, to let you in, but my night-cap is on. I need say no more to a lady of your quick and delicate perceptions."

"Your night-cap, sir! how dare you talk of your night-cap to me? What have I to do with it?"

"Nothing, thank heaven!" said Monsieur Durand, in a low tone.

"Well, sir," resumed Madame Martin's voice, "I shall go, as you do not choose to let me in. Indeed, I have only this much to say. Having been so ill advised as to act on the information you gave us, my daughter Virginie and I have been drawn in to ex-

pense, and have received insults, from which you, sir, will not have the spirit to avenge us. Good night, sir."

Her voice was heard no more, and Monsieur Durand fell in a troubled sleep, from which he awoke three times in a cold perspiration, having dreamed each time that Madame Martin, after forcing her way into his apartment, insisted no longer on his marrying Virginie, but on his marrying *her*, as a slight atonement for the many wrongs he had inflicted on her feelings and her pocket.

Monsieur Théophile would have been calmer in his mind if he had known the unexpected turn affairs had taken.

The feuds of Madame Legrand and Madame Martin never lasted. War is unprofitable, and these two old women of the world knew the value and the blessings of peace.

Madame Legrand quickly found out that her niece would not do, and veered back to Virginie, as a matter of course. Indeed, with such zeal did she enter into the plans she had done her best to frustrate, that she asked Virginie to spend a week with her. The young girl made some resistance, but it was not quite so strong as might have been expected from her previous reluctance to put on the white muslin. A word of authority from Madame Martin reduced her to obedience.

For two days Madame Martin, who was supposed to be in the country, kept herself locked up. Early on the morning of the third day she slipped over to Madame Legrand's, and was admitted to a mysterious interview in that lady's bedroom.

"And how are matters going on?" asked Madame Martin.

"Well, well," calmly replied Madame Legrand. "Monsieur Lefèvre is enamoured, I saw that from the first."

"And how does Virginie behave?" asked Madame Martin, "like a fool?"

"Not exactly. She does not give Monsieur Lefèvre many opportunities of meeting her: but I rather fancy that her timidity and bashfulness are advantageous. He already lends her books."

"That's good," approvingly said Madame Martin.

"Excellent. And now, my dear friend, if it is to be a match, I may as well tell you what I should like. I am moderate by nature. A dozen of silver forks and spoons will do."

"My dear Madame Legrand," replied Madame Martin, with a placid nod, "nothing can repay a friendship like yours. If Virginie becomes Madame Lefèvre, she owes it to you."

"Perhaps your cousin might think," began Madame Legrand.

"*He!*" interrupted Madame Martin, with great scorn, "I should like to see *him* expecting anything. The mean little fellow."

With this eulogy Madame Martin went back to her apartment, but lest her dear friend Madame Legrand should take a real fancy to send back Virginie, she, Madame Martin, thought it her wisest course to go off to Neuilly on a visit to an aged aunt, who was too far gone in age to protest against the intrusion. What could she say, moreover, when her niece entered the

house with the avowed intention of making her comfortable?

"I do not see, aunt, why I should not stay with you, now that Virginie is going to get married," she said graciously.

"Is she going to get married?" asked the aunt, lifting up a feeble head, "and with whom?"

"With Monsieur Lefèvre of Lyons," replied Madame Martin.

"Not the one who has two wives already," said her aunt, musingly.

"Two wives!" echoed Madame Martin, in a hollow voice.

"Yes, he was married abroad, and he married another lady in France, and there was a great law-suit about which was the right wife."

"It cannot be that one," said Madame Martin; "I will never believe," she added, raising her voice, as if the culprit were within hearing, "I will never believe that, bad as he is, my cousin Théodore Durand could help to delude Virginie into such a marriage as that."

The aunt burst into a croaking laugh.

"Oh!" she cried, lifting up her hands, "if *he* had anything to do with it I consider it a settled thing. Poor Virginie, poor girl."

It was night, but Madame Martin's resolve was taken in a second. She sent for a cab, jumped into it, and drove to her cousin's door, for wrath proved stronger, in this instance, than maternal anxiety.

Unconscious of the brooding storm, Monsieur Théophile Durand, who was an economical man, was cooking his dinner on a stove in the closet, when a mild,

deceitful ring at the door induced him to open it. In bounced Madame Martin, wrathful and smiling.

"Good afternoon, sir," she said sweetly, "I hope you are well, sir?"

"Quite well," faintly replied Monsieur Durand. "Pray be seated."

"Thank you, sir, a carriage is waiting for me at the door. Perhaps you will kindly answer me this question, sir, How many wives, to your knowledge, has Monsieur Lefèvre got?"

"Tw — o," gasped Monsieur Durand, "but the second is the right one. I learned it yesterday."

"Thank you, sir, I am very much obliged to you. I have it from your own lips, on your confession that you advised me to marry my daughter to a man that has two wives living."

"My dear cousin, I thought him single."

"Did you inquire?" was the stern rejoinder.

"No — o."

"Then how dare you speak of Monsieur Lefèvre to me, sir?"

"But you know all about it!" desperately exclaimed Monsieur Durand.

"I sir, I! Do you mean to add insult to injury?"

"But when you came the other evening and rang, when I had my night-cap on, you knew it surely!"

Madame Martin loftily begged he would neither recall that evening nor his conduct thereon, and again asked if he meant to add insult to injury.

Monsieur Durand, who was losing his temper, testily replied that he meant to eat his dinner, and

unceremoniously returned to the closet and to his cooking.

"Very well, sir," resumed the voice of Madame Martin from the outer room, "very well, sir, you will remember this."

The slam of a door told Monsieur Durand that she was gone. His first selfish, natural feeling was one of self-congratulation at escaping her tongue, and being allowed to eat his hard-earned dinner in peace. Then came remorse and concern at the error into which he had fallen, and an earnest desire to mend matters, so far as they could still be mended.

Monsieur Théophile Durand had a good deal of that nervous timidity which lies most in manner, and does not exclude courage. His bravery, for lying dormant, was none the less real; he now got excited about the wrongs of Virginie, and resolved to right them without loss of time.

"The cold-hearted villain!" he exclaimed, seizing his hat and cane, and hurrying out, "did he think that poor child had no protector, no friend? We shall see — we shall see."

Monsieur Durand lived at no great distance from Madame Legrand's house. In a few minutes he had reached her door, and was knocking violently. A frightened-looking servant answered the call.

"Madame is out," she said.

"I want to see Monsieur Lefèvre," sternly replied Théophile; "lead me into his presence."

The servant afterwards declared he looked quite awful, and that resistance was out of the question. Without even asking his name, she opened a door and

ushered him into the room where Monsieur Lefèvre was sitting with Virginie.

This requires explanation. Monsieur Lefèvre, as Madame Legrand plainly saw, was very much smitten with her young friend, and readily availed himself of every opportunity of meeting her, which the elder lady afforded him. From lending books, he soon came to giving Virginie music lessons; Madame Legrand was present, of course, but the lessons were long, and she sometimes left the room, to return almost immediately, it is true. But this day Madame Legrand left and did not return; she forgot Virginie, propriety, and prudence. Her cook had allowed her apricot preserves to burn; an unmistakable odour reached her in the drawing-room. She rose precipitately, rushed down-stairs, and found the jam on the fire and the kitchen deserted. The faithless cook was flirting with the butcher's boy at the garden gate, "and my apricots, my most valuable apricots," as Madame Legrand afterwards said in relating this lamentable occurrence to a friend, "were left to their fate."

Desperate emergencies inspire desperate resolves. Madame Legrand took up the hissing jam, called the cook, gave her warning on the spot, then solemnly bade the housemaid deny her to the whole world.

"Give me a white apron," she said, "and no matter who comes, say I am not at home."

Thus Virginie remained alone with Monsieur Lefèvre. Neither the teacher nor the pupil were at first conscious of this important fact. Monsieur Lefèvre, happening to turn his head round, first perceived that Madame Legrand was gone. Virginie next, appealing to that lady, became aware of her absence, and of what

was infinitely worse in decorous France, that she, Virginie Martin, was alone with her music-master. What should she do? To leave precipitately might look like an affectation of prudery, to remain might make Monsieur Lefèvre hold her forward or imprudent. Still something must be done. She hesitated a while, then at length, and with a painful blush that betrayed her embarrassment, she rose, and closing the piano, said as calmly as she could:

"I have troubled you enough to-day: Madame Legrand may want me below, I shall go and see."

Monsieur Lefèvre looked undecided; but by the time Virginie had crossed the room and reached the door, his mind was made up, and following her quickly, he arrested her with the entreaty:

"May I request that you will hear me for a few moments?" Virginie remained with her hand on the lock, and by her silence gave consent.

What passed, and what Monsieur Lefèvre said, need not be told. Of course it was a declaration of love and an offer of marriage. Virginie's reply we need not record, of course it was modest assent.

Love is a beautiful thing; but for a man to declare his affection to a woman is by no means so delightful a task as might be imagined, and for a woman to hear the aforesaid declaration, even when it comes from a preferred lover, is not always so pleasant as might seem. It is often quite a relief when a third unconscious person steps in and breaks on the awkward, howsoever rapturous, silence that must needs follow.

On the general principle, therefore, Théophile Durand ought to have been welcome to both Virginie

and her lover; but strange to say, whether his interruption came a little too soon, that is to say, before the rapture had subsided and the awkwardness had come, or a little too late, that is, after the said awkwardness was quite over and his presence no longer needed, — somehow or other, in short, he came most unseasonably, startling by the abruptness of his entrance the fair Virginie, who was sitting on a sofa, and who, on seeing him, got up with a little scream, and considerably annoying her companion, who rose more slowly from the couch, and returned with interest the scowl of Monsieur Théophile Durand.

“Sir,” he sharply said, “who are you? What do you want?”

“Virginie, take my arm and leave this house,” was Monsieur Durand’s indignant reply.

On hearing an utter stranger call his mistress by her Christian name, Monsieur Lefèvre reddened and looked angry. Whilst Virginie made a motion of disgust, and said sharply:

“I beg, Monsieur Durand, that you will not meddle in my concerns.”

“Infatuated girl!” said Monsieur Durand, filled with pity for her blindness, “do you know this man? Child, he has two wives living! Two wives.”

Monsieur Lefèvre laughed scornfully.

“The accusation is too ridiculous for me to resent it,” he said, calmly, “and I am sure Mademoiselle Martin will not credit it one moment.”

“Not one,” said Virginie, with great warmth, “not one.”

“I repeat it, he has two wives,” said Monsieur

Durand, warming with his subject, "a poor young Indian girl, whom he married in the South Sea Isles, and a lady of Lyons —"

"Sir, I will hear no more on this absurd matter," interrupted Monsieur Lefèvre, waxing wroth.

"Virginie, take my arm and leave the house," said Monsieur Durand; "I tell you this man has two wives, that your mother is distracted with grief on your account, and that she insists on your leaving this wretched house."

Monsieur Lefèvre looked stiff and offended.

"If Madame Martin had done me the honour of requesting a personal explanation," he said, "all this would have been avoided. I know, of course, that she will regret her precipitate conduct, but I do not know how far I can consent to overlook such unmerited insults."

And without giving Virginie a look, Monsieur Lefèvre left the room. The young girl burst into tears; but Monsieur Durand took her arm and led her away, asking indignantly if she regretted not marrying a man who had two wives living.

It was lucky Madame Martin lived opposite; Virginie could scarcely cross the street, and Monsieur Durand thought she would surely faint on the staircase. He was the more frightened that Madame Martin was out. The portress had given the key of their apartment to Virginie as they passed her lodge; for this strange mother, instead of snatching her child from the fangs of the bigamist, had left word that she was gone back to Neuilly.

"There is something dreadful under all this," thought Monsieur Durand, foreseeing a calamity; "I

must lock up Virginie, take a cab and rush off to Neuilly, there I shall warn Madame Martin that I have rid her of this determined bigamist, then, *ma foi*, I shall wash my hands of the whole affair." So said, so done. Virginie, though weak and faint, declared she could remain alone, and Monsieur Durand took care to lock her up slyly, and walk off with the key in his pocket. A cab was soon found, and in less than an hour Monsieur Durand entered the house of Madame Martin's aunt.

The two ladies were at dinner when he was announced.

"Monsieur Durand!" said Madame Martin, laying down her fork, "what has he been doing?"

"Show him in — show him in," said the old aunt, with feeble eagerness, "I know it will be something funny."

In walked Monsieur Durand, cool, dignified, and important. "Madame," said he to the aunt, "I must apologize" —

"Never mind, never mind," she interrupted, "what is it? — let us hear it."

"Cousin," said Théophile, addressing Madame Martin, "Virginie is safe."

Virginie's mother heard him with singular calmness.

"What about it?" she asked.

"I locked her up myself in your home," pursued Théophile, "and here is the key of your apartment."

Madame Martin stared, but did not utter one word.

"I may say that I have saved her," pursued Monsieur Durand. "I found her alone with that wretch,

and from her gently-confused look I have no doubt he had been making love to her. But I exposed him to her, cousin; exasperated him so that he pretty clearly gave her up, and left the room in a great pretence of anger; upon which I took her arm, forcibly led her out, locked her up, and came here."

Monsieur Durand wiped his forehead, and smiled complacently on his cousin.

"I knew it!" cried Madame Martin, striking her plate with her knife, and thus recklessly breaking it in the exasperation of her anger; "I knew it — he has ruined all — all ruined — ruined." Monsieur Durand heard her amazed.

"Miserable man," she resumed, "what made you meddle? just tell me that; could you not let a mother judge for her child?"

"A bigamist!" began Monsieur Durand.

"A bigamist!" screamed Madame Martin, "he a bigamist, a distinguished Professor of Eloquence in the University of Louvain, at a salary of six thousand francs a year, if not ten, — he a bigamist? Say that you are a bigamist, sir!"

"I?"

"Yes, sir, a bigamist, I maintain it."

Here a gurgling noise was heard, and it was discovered that the old aunt was choking in her arm-chair, the result of indiscreet laughter.

"Wretch!" said Madame Martin, flying to her aid, "did you come here to commit murder?"

She slapped her aunt in the back, until the venerable lady came round, and though still much exhausted, partly recovered her breath. This satisfactory result being obtained, Madame Martin declared that, thanks

to her obliging cousin Monsieur Durand, she must have another jaunt to Paris, and, without finishing her dinner, she threw on, rather than she put, her bonnet and shawl, and accompanied by the discomfited Durand, she walked down to the cab, informing the cabman that if he drove quick his fare would be doubled.

Madame Martin was too much exasperated to scold her unfortunate cousin. She merely asked, with keen and cutting irony, how a man of his bright wit and experience could take a refined professor of eloquence for a coarse merchant and a bigamist, and how he dare take on himself to lock up Virginie? and as Monsieur Durand was too much cast down to reply, she maintained a sulky silence until the cab stopped at her door. She then alighted, and sternly said:

"Here we part, sir. Your conduct I will not qualify. You have covered yourself and your family with disgrace, you have done your best to prevent my daughter Virginie from making a most excellent and desirable match. Your work is consummated. Go; I request that I may never see your face again."

So saying, Madame Martin majestically entered the house, slammed the door in her cousin's face, and left him the cab to pay.

"Two francs for going, one franc for waiting, and four francs for having driven fast back to Paris: seven francs, besides what Monsieur chooses to give," added the cabman.

"Take it, take it all!" desperately cried Monsieur Durand, throwing him the money and running away.

CHAPTER III.

THAT Virginie was married, that the wedding dinner was choice, that the bride looked lovely, and the bridegroom thoroughly blessed, Théophile Durand learned through report. But he was not asked to the marriage ceremony, he was not one of the dinner guests; "and though without me the two ungrateful creatures would never have been married," said Monsieur Théophile Durand, "I received my usual reward: neglect."

Under this mortifying neglect Monsieur Durand was not doomed to linger. His new cousin ended by laughing at the bigamist story; Virginie was too happy to feel any resentment, and Madame Martin magnanimously declared that she forgave her cousin: in short, the three united in extending the hand of peace to the offender. Monsieur Théophile Durand, was formally asked to dinner: being a good-natured man, and having at heart a foolish liking for his kindred, he accepted the invitation. The dinner was strictly a family dinner, but in honour of the reconciliation, a little soirée followed it.

"And now," thought Théophile Durand, "my troubles in this quarter are surely over. Virginie is married. I have made ample apologies to her husband, who is a very agreeable fellow when he is not excited, and Madame Martin does not appear to entertain the least matrimonial design upon me. Yes, I think I am really safe in that quarter." So thought and soliloquized the deluded man, never suspecting the world of trouble that awaited him.

We have seen that the reconciliation dinner to which Théophile Durand had been asked was followed by an evening réunion, quite select. Madame Martin whispered to her cousin: "I could not ask Madame Legrand nor *that* set. No, my son-in-law's position would not allow it."

The réunion was more than select; it was decidedly thin, and its successor — for Madame Martin insisted that Virginie should receive every Thursday evening — was too select for Monsieur Lefèvre's taste. From nine o'clock Madame Martin and her daughter sat in the gaily-lit drawing-room, vainly waiting for visitors, who came not. At ten, indeed, Théophile Durand made his appearance in correct evening costume, but, to the vexation of Virginie and to her husband's evident annoyance, not a soul besides.

As eleven struck Monsieur Lefèvre said to his wife:

"Another such evening, my dear, and we will give up parties."

"It is very annoying," said Virginie, "I had provided refreshments and cakes, — and now they are wasted, as it were. We do not want them."

"It is tiresome," said Madame Martin, "but we must try again."

Monsieur Lefèvre did not answer. It was plain that only politeness prevented him from giving a flat denial.

Madame Martin was annoyed at the evening's failure, and alarmed for the future. Her son-in-law was kind and courteous, but he was not manageable. He had already shown a strong inclination to authority, not despotism certainly, but authority under any aspect

was distasteful to Madame Martin; it did not let her have her own way, which she was naturally fond of. Like a prudent woman as she was, she avoided struggles: Monsieur Lefèvre would not be controlled or managed, but he might be led gently. To lead him skilfully was therefore her object: but how was she to do so in this present matter?

"What can I do if the people will not come?" she said confidentially to Théophile Durand, "we asked twenty, and you see not one came."

"Ask forty," shrewdly said her cousin.

"Forty!" exclaimed Madame Martin, with a start, "and where should we put them? Our drawing-room is so small."

"They will not come," replied Monsieur Durand. "The twenty did not come; the forty will no more come than the twenty; but forty people will have had the compliment paid them of being asked, and you will not have had the trouble of receiving them."

This was an idea; Madame Martin felt it was a valuable one too; but, casting an alarmed look towards her son-in-law, she whispered to Théophile Durand: "Speak low, I entreat you. Edouard is so peculiar, so matter-of-fact, so literal, that he would never ask more people than he wished to see; but I shall certainly follow the plan you suggest; how to do so I do not yet know; but where there is a will there is a way."

A way Madame Martin certainly found. She asked not forty, but fifty people, and chose them so judiciously, that when her son-in-law expressed his surprise at seeing persons drop in whom he had not asked, and she carelessly replied: "I just asked them to fill up in

case the others should not come," he expressed his satisfaction at her prudence.

From this it will be readily gathered that the third party was more successful than the two first. Fortune favoured, indeed, Théophile Durand's suggestion: fifteen people mustered; ten belonged to the original twenty, and five to the additional number asked by Madame Martin. She expressed her satisfaction to Théophile Durand, by asking him once for all.

"Yes, cousin," she said suavely, "you are always welcome. Virginie and her husband have quite a regard for you, and I trust you know and feel the esteem in which I hold you. Our last evening flagged a little; my floating debt, as I call my superfluous invités, did not come in well. We had a dearth of black coats. Suppose you send us a sprinkling of your friends the employés."

"With great pleasure," replied Théophile Durand, who delighted to oblige, and in his generosity he forgot the soreness he had felt on seeing Madame Martin plume herself on the success she owed to his advice, but which she did not dream of acknowledging to her son-in-law.

He set to work that same day; he spoke to his chef, Monsieur Randon, a lofty man not easily propitiated, but with whom he was a bit of a favourite. He had the good fortune to find the potentate in an excellent temper.

"I see, I see," he said, "a young couple who require encouragement; well, Durand, I like to encourage such. I shall go; Madame Randon shall go. What is there to be?"

"Music, I believe, and a young poet is to repeat some verses."

"I like poetry," said Monsieur Randon, "and a game of cards."

"My cousin is a first-rate écarté player," eagerly said Théophile.

"I like cards and refreshments," continued Monsieur Randon.

"Virginie is profuse with refreshments, platefuls of cakes, ices, &c."

"I shall go," paternally said Monsieur Randon, "I like to encourage struggling merit. Tell your cousins, Durand, that they may rely upon me and Madame Randon."

Théophile Durand delivered the message to Madame Martin, who on hearing the tidings threw her arms around his neck, and called him an angel.

Everything promised well, yet one of those mysterious presentiments which, in our ignorance, we do not sufficiently regard, warned Théophile Durand to stay at home, and go to bed on that fatal Thursday. Kindness prompted him to do the very reverse. "My poor cousin wants me," he thought, "her floating debt, as she calls it, runs short. My presence is necessary. True, I should like home and quiet best; but we must not be selfish." Supported by these generous and philanthropic feelings, Monsieur Durand dressed himself and walked off to Monsieur Lefèvre's house.

Carriages encumbered the door.

"Oh, ho!" thought Monsieur Durand, "some one else has a party in my cousin's house. Well, truly, why not?" And not altogether displeased to show a

stylish group of ladies in ample muslin, and gentlemen in white cravats, who were coming up the staircase behind him, that he too was going to a party, Théophile Durand gave a sharp, jerking ring at his cousin's door. But the ladies stopped behind him. Were they, too, invited to Madame Lefèvre's evening party? They were, there could be no doubt about it. —

The door opened, and a fragrance of smoke issued forth.

"Is the place on fire?" asked Monsieur Durand, stepping back.

"No, sir," replied the servant, "but we have been obliged to make fires in all the rooms, and some of the fires will not burn."

"Dreadful," said one of the ladies, "I hate smoke."

The servant-girl looked at the speaker and her companions, then asked in a peculiar tone:

"Are you ladies coming to us? Perhaps it is upstairs you are going?"

"Madame Lefèvre," replied one of the gentlemen.

"Walk in," said the servant, "but you'll get no room, that's all."

"No room!" they all exclaimed in a breath.

"There has been no room since half-past nine," replied the servant; "the drawing-room has been full since eight: the two bed-rooms are full; the dining-room is full, and the ante-room is crammed."

They stared incredulous and amazed, but they soon acquired melancholy confirmation that the servant had spoken truly. As she closed the door upon them, they found themselves in a smoky ante-room, hemmed in on every side by people all standing, and none of them in the best of tempers. The new-comers were stared

at in rather an ungracious fashion, and a lady in blue, who had a sharp nose, said with great asperity of tone and manner:

"There is decidedly an hour beyond which people ought not to come to parties: it is ridiculous. May I ask what you are treading on my dress for, sir?" she added, looking daggers at Théophile Durand.

He apologized with the greatest humility, but excused himself on the plea of a desire to get into the drawing-room. The lady with the sharp nose giggled hysterically.

"And do you suppose, sir," she asked, "that we, who have been standing here this hour without being able to get in, are going to let you in? No, sir, you came last, and out you shall stay."

The ladies in muslin, who had entered with Théophile Durand, looked lofty and mildly disgusted.

"Oh! people may look at me," said the lady with the sharp nose. "I do not care; but those who came last shall not get in first. It is bad enough to stand two hours and not to be offered a biscuit or a glass of water."

Here a stir took place in one of the inner rooms, and a male voice was heard entreating:

"Pray let us out. Let me beg for a little room. We only want to get out."

"It is very extraordinary," said the lady with the sharp nose, "that after being in such a hurry to get in and prevent other people from enjoying what there is to be enjoyed, some people will insist on disturbing others and getting out again. I think for my part they should be kept in."

But the rumour that a lady was fainting opened a

passage to a stout gentleman, who appeared half bearing, half dragging, an equally stout lady. In vain the lady with the sharp nose protested that this was but a mean and shallow artifice to deprive last comers of their rightful places, and that it should be resisted. The red face of the stout gentleman was bathed in genuine perspiration, and there was no mistaking the zeal with which he bore and dragged the stout lady after him.

"A chair, for Heaven's sake," he gasped, as he got out of the crowd; "is there no one that will have the charity to get me a chair?"

"Chairs!" giggled the lady in blue, "does Monsieur suppose that if there were chairs ladies would remain standing for two hours?"

Monsieur was going to declare desperately that he supposed nothing, when his eye caught that of Théophile Durand, who was vainly hiding in the crowd, and who turned pale on meeting it: the stout gentleman was his chef, his superior.

"Oh! you are here," said Monsieur Randon, with smooth sarcasm, "may I request you to help me to support Madame Randon?"

Théophile obeyed, and assisted in propping Madame Randon, who was slowly recovering, and whom her husband soon entirely surrendered to his employé's care. Being thus relieved from a considerable burden, Monsieur Randon wiped his damp forehead, and, regardless of place or time, thus addressed his subordinate:

"Well, sir, I congratulate you. So this is the little intellectual soirée you asked me to patronize, and to which like a deluded man I brought a dozen of friends

and their innocent families! Sir, you are an impostor," added Monsieur Randon in his wrath. "Come, my love," he added, taking the arm of his wife, who gave Théophile a withering glance for his pains, "let us leave this ill-fated house, where people are smothered, smoked — and starved," added Monsieur Randon, with bitter emphasis.

They stalked out; Théophile Durand remained stunned, heedless of the sarcastic looks the lady in blue cast upon him. Then, suddenly awakening to the fearful consequences this untoward event might produce on his prospects, he rushed down-stairs, hoping to overtake Monsieur Randon, to mollify his wrath by humble apologies. But Monsieur and Madame Randon had entered their carriage, and were already rolling away.

Théophile Durand was roused. Was this the reward he got for endeavouring to serve his cousin? Randon, the great Randon, had been alienated for ever, and for what? for want of due politeness and attention, for want of an ice or a plateful of cakes.

"She shall hear a piece of my mind!" desperately exclaimed Monsieur Durand, and remembering that it was useless to go up the front staircase, he went up by the back or kitchen staircase, undignified but sure. No sooner had he tapped at the kitchen door than it flew open. On the threshold within appeared Madame Martin pale and breathless.

"Where are the ices?" she exclaimed, "speak, sir, where are they? Have you brought the cakes at least? No; then pray, sir, what are you a limonadier for?"

"I am not a limonadier," said Théophile, "I am your injured cousin."

"My dear creature," cried Madame Martin, clasping both his hands, "run for ices, run for cakes, run for anything. Where the people are come from I do not know; but they keep pouring in. The place is full, three ladies have fainted already. Go, now do, there is a good soul. There is a pastry-cook round the corner, who sells odds and ends at two francs a pound, and procures ices as cheap. Here is money, go, pray go."

She shut the door in his face, and Monsieur Durand found himself with silver in his hand on a black landing.

He was a good-natured man: he forgot his wrongs in his cousin's calamities. He went for the ices; he went for the cakes. He went not once, but three times. By twelve his labours were over, the people had discovered that there was nothing more to be had by staying, and they departed slowly. By this time, too, Monsieur Durand's wrath had cooled, and he magnanimously resolved not to crush his cousin with the name of Randon. "The poor thing has had trouble enough," he generously thought, "let her rest; let her rest."

But 'generosity is a delusion; with a sigh of relief Monsieur Durand was preparing to depart, when Madame Martin solemnly begged him to enter her son-in-law's study: there Théophile found his cousin black as night.

"Sir," he said, "I can scarcely credit, and I certainly cannot qualify, the extraordinary statement I have just received from Madame Martin, that for the painful and disgraceful scenes which took place here

this evening I am indebted to you; that you took the liberty of inviting to this house something like thirty or forty of your personal friends, making me and my domestic arrangements a matter of ridicule and amusement to them. I repeat, sir, comments are superfluous: but I beg to assure you, that this second breach will not be so easily repaired as the first."

Monsieur Lefèvre rose, bowed stiffly, and left the room.

Théophile Durand remained dumb. He had incurred the wrath of Monsieur Randon, he had been made an errand boy of, and now he was snubbed. The cup was full. He went home, took to his bed, and was ill a week.

This is the last trouble on record of a quiet man; that it will be the last no one who has perused the preceding pages will readily believe.

YOUNG FRANCE.

TANCREDI P. MATHIEU was a member of the Young France party, when there was a Young France, which is now some years ago. He was the son of an honest and wealthy Parisian grocer, who allowed him a handsome income and total liberty of action.

Our hero's real name was Pierre Mathieu. Tancredi had been assumed for poetical and euphonious reasons. His friends, who knew his sensitiveness on that head, never gave him any other appellation. Like the whole Young France brotherhood, Tancredi wore long curly hair, a narrow pointed hat, white kid gloves, and a shirt collar turned down with the most Byronian despair. Any one who looked on that shirt collar could have told that its owner was a melancholy man — one "whose young aspirations had been nipped in the bud by the chilling breath of an unfeeling world."

Tancredi's existence had indeed been embittered by several severe disappointments. In the first place, he was neither an unknown foundling, nor an exile, nor a persecuted man: he had enjoyed throughout life the most provoking and commonplace happiness. He did not possess the comfort of having a tyrannical father. Monsieur Mathieu the elder was the soul of good nature. Easy, placable, and fond of peace, he allowed Tancredi to have his way. There is no

denying he would have liked to see his son at the head of a thriving business, but since his vocation did not lie in that direction he raised no opposition to his joining the Young France tribe, wearing long hair and a pointed hat. Some persons kindly assured him that Pierre — they scorned to call him Tancredi — was on the high road to ruin. But Monsieur Mathieu composedly replied that his son was only afflicted with a temporary mania, then very prevalent amongst young Frenchmen, and that he did not despair to see him one day radically cured. This conviction did not prevent the grocer from reasoning with his son; he even endeavoured to show him that he was acting very foolishly; but as Tancredi immediately assumed the tone and attitude of a martyr, and as his father — who, under the appearance of great simplicity, was, nevertheless, possessed of much shrewdness and good sense — perceived that he longed to be persecuted for his opinions, he gradually dropped the subject, and left him thoroughly free.

Tancredi keenly felt what he termed his father's injustice. He was at war with society — so at least he said — and he had a right to persecution. His friends all agreed with him that it was a hard case, but advised him, however, to bear with it patiently. His bosom friend, Charlemagne Champion by name, for imperial and chivalrous appellations were rife in their circle, comforted him as best he might.

"My good fellow," he said, with an odd twinkle in his eye, "fathers will be so — provoking — perverse — doing the very things they should not; but better times are coming."

And Charlemagne Champion, who, though Young

France, was suspected to have some of the Old France wag in him still, squeezed his friend's hand with expressive warmth.

But Monsieur Mathieu's irritating passiveness was not Tancredi's only cause of grief: another source of bitter regret lay in his personal appearance. Somehow or other he had inherited from his father the grocer, a round, rosy, good-humoured face, of which he could not possibly get rid. Notwithstanding his constant efforts to infuse into it some slight portion of the poetical melancholy which, to use his own words, "was devouring his soul," it always looked pleased, happy, and contented. To make matters worse, he was remarkably fair, and inclined to corpulency. Gladly would Tancredi have sacrificed half his worldly hopes to be thin and sallow. Accordingly, when Charlemagne Champion spoke of better times, he sighed, shook his head, and casting a despondent look at the glass, he asked in a hollow voice, "Charlemagne, will that face ever change?"

"I hope not," composedly replied Charlemagne, "it is the living likeness of the immortal Robespierre." Tancredi gave a start.

"Like him — I am like him!" he exclaimed.

"Do you not see it?"

"Why, yes," musingly replied Tancredi, "you are quite right, I do see something in the contour. Robespierre was a minister, but I am not sorry to be like him."

Thus comforted, Tancredi took heart. Besides, like all generous spirits, our hero often forgot his own unhappiness in his philanthropic compassion for the ignorance and blindness of mankind at large; he was

convinced that the world was not yet half civilized, and that the bourgeois of Paris, especially, were in a lamentable state of barbarism. As he was himself a bourgeois by birth, he conceived that his "mission" must plainly lie in civilizing his unhappy brethren, and as he happened to entertain for them the most thorough and hearty contempt, he was evidently peculiarly fitted for this delicate task.

The bourgeois are the middle classes of France. They chiefly consist of retired tradespeople, small capitalists, and employés, or clerks, in the offices of the government, from whom they generally receive a moderate salary for their services. They are a quiet and inoffensive race, but remarkably timid and cautious, and tenacious of their habits and opinions to an extraordinary degree. Seeing them so far behind their age, Tancredi generously resolved to devote himself to their improvement. Whether they were willing to be improved or not was no consideration; indeed Tancredi did not care a pin on the subject. If he could not succeed in making the bourgeois better, he had little doubt of getting persecuted by them; so that, whichever way the wind blew, he felt pretty sure of reaping some benefit. These preliminaries being settled, he resolved to begin his attack on a little colony of bourgeois, which had been settling for the last century in one of the most quiet and retired streets of the Marais, not far from the spot where stood his father's house.

This street, which shall be nameless, very much resembled a country town. Though not possessing more than a dozen houses on either side, it was divided into several sets, which knew nothing whatever of one another. The most important set, and that which im-

mediately drew Tancredi's attention, was Madame Jacquemin's, a lady who, with her husband, a retired dyer, inhabited a coquettish little house, ornamented with a grass plot in front, and a garden at the back, and situated in the most conspicuous part of the street. But notwithstanding these advantages, M. Jacquemin was an unhappy man. He had toiled all his life in order to enjoy his old age in peace; and instead of his fancied happiness, he now found nothing in retirement save ennui and weariness of spirit. It was in vain that he spent the day in walking up and down his handsome house and about his pleasant garden; they could administer no pleasure to his mind. He would gladly have given them both for the dark and dismal shop of the Rue St. Denis, where he had spent thirty years of his life in providing for his present discomfort. Madame Jacquemin, who bore her misfortunes with a truly heroic spirit, endeavoured to arouse her husband from his unhappy state. She took him to the play, but he invariably fell asleep before the close of the first act; she then wished to introduce him into fashionable society — a plan which failed signally; and finally, as a last resource, made him take in all the daily newspapers, and give parties twice a week. M. Jacquemin never looked at one of his newspapers himself; but as he nevertheless, and very judiciously, made it a rule that not one of them should leave his house, and as he very liberally invited his friends to "come and look at the papers," his salon was every morning converted into a kind of reading-room, over which he presided, and where, for two or three hours at least, he could once more fancy himself in his shop, surrounded by his customers.

His evening parties were not quite so amusing; because, as Madame Jacquemin, often observed, "they could not ask everybody." Almost all their guests were inhabitants of the street; but there were of course vulgar insignificant houses, whose lodgers could, under no pretence whatever, be received or admitted by the dyer's wife. Good M. Jacquemin, who, in the fulness of his ennui, would gladly have opened his house to the whole world, was much annoyed by his wife's scruples, but nevertheless compelled to submit to them. Amongst the favoured few were M. Bonnet and his wife, a couple who resided on the first-floor of number seven, and who, as Madame Legrand, a waspish little widow, who lived above them, spitefully averred, gave themselves airs in consequence. But as there was a constant feud between her and Madame Bonnet, too much faith should not be placed in the lady's assertions. M. Bonnet was a melancholy-looking man, exceedingly nervous and timid, and employed at the war-office, whence he often came home in the evening blank with dismay, hinting at horrible tidings from Abd-el-Kader, or intimating the likelihood of a war with "perfidious Albion." Being considered a profound politician, and suspected of knowing much more of government affairs than he chose to tell, he was much respected everywhere, save in his own family, over which Madame Bonnet, who was a very high-spirited woman, boasted that she alone held dominion. Her three daughters were, like their mother, tall, bony, and high-spirited girls.

Madame Legrand, the officer's widow who tenanted the second-floor of the same house, was likewise admitted at the Jacquemin parties. She was thin,

withered, had no children, and was immoderately fond of animals. Whole generations of cats and dogs revelled in her salon and bedroom; cages of birds were hung up everywhere in her apartment; and golden fishes swam in vases full of water on every window-sill. Monsieur Laurent, a stout old bachelor, not unlike a full-blown rose, dwelt on the third-floor. He had a mortal hatred against Legrand and her menagerie, those of the canine race in particular. Of this fact the dogs seemed to have an instinctive knowledge, for whenever he came up or downstairs, they snarled and growled; and if they chanced to be on the landing, never missed the opportunity of flying at his heels. Though Monsieur Laurent disliked animals, he had a passion for flowers and gardening; he had turned his rooms into a perfect conservatory, and the greatest portion of his time was spent in cultivating and watching over a certain patch of land, about as large as a dining-table, and termed his garden. Monsieur Laurent was of course another of Monsieur Jacquemin's invités.

But, besides the inhabitants of number seven, there were various other individuals admitted at the retired dyer's parties. Amongst these were several old ladies, who did an immense quantity of worsted work; and a mysterious family named the De Lorrains, and thought to be of noble extraction, who inhabited an old dreamy-looking hotel at the end of the street. They were six in all, were very pale, tall, and thin; they dressed meanly, accepted every invitation, and gave none in return. Some charitable souls indeed noticed that they never refused anything, not even the refreshments which were liberally handed round at the dyer's parties; and as to the cakes, it was actually suspected that they

were so vulgar and ungenteel as to have an appetite for them. It was also known — it is wonderful how those things are known — that in the coldest weather they had no fires. Sometimes, indeed, they indulged themselves in a fagot, to which they set fire with great ceremony; the youngest De Lorraine being always on such an occasion despatched in a great hurry to summon his father, in order that he might partake of the genial heat ere it was quite extinct. At first the De Lorrains were thought mean — then they were accused of being poor; but many defended them, and asserted that they were only misers. It then began to be reported that they were immensely rich, and their company was for some time eagerly sought. It is true their fortune, if they had one, was of no great use to anybody, not even to themselves; but who has not felt the sense of security, the comfort, which lies in having a rich acquaintance? As years, however, passed away, and they lived quite as meanly, and dressed as shabbily as ever, this impression wore off: they began to be looked upon as impostors, and there was some talk of discarding them altogether. But Madame Jacquemin, who was of a compassionate disposition, resolved to spare them, on account of their poverty and their gentle blood; they accordingly continued to be admitted to the soirées, where they acted a subordinate part, being patronised by every one. Such were the individuals who met at M. Jacquemin's parties; if their company did not afford him much amusement, it was not their fault. The retired dyer was very selfish: he plainly showed his visitors that he cared for no one but himself; yet, strangely enough, everybody sympathised

with him, everybody seemed ready to administer comfort and advice.

"If Monsieur Jacquemin would give dinners," suggested the De Lorrains, "he would find it a very interesting occupation."

"How so?" suspiciously asked Madame Jacquemin.

"Human nature, character," replied the De Lorrains: "the dinner table is the true place to see them in; physiognomy, too, and even phrenology, can be studied to advantage from the dinner table, and with Monsieur Jacquemin's remarkable power of observation —"

"Pooh, pooh! no such a thing," interrupted Monsieur Jacquemin, rather crossly, "besides, I hate to look at people eating."

"It is animal," said Madame Legrand, who was present, "and is only beautiful when performed by animals. It is exquisite, it is delicious to see a bird feed."

"I rather like larks roasted," said Monsieur Jacquemin; "they are nice, there is no doubt about it, but then it takes so many to make a dish."

"My dear sir, you misunderstand me," said Madame Legrand, rather shocked at the suggestion: "eat larks! sweet, harmonious, musical creatures! No, no, I meant it was charming to see birds peck their food. I have a canary which I would lend —"

"Oh! for Heaven's sake, do not mention it," interrupted Madame De Lorrain, with an hysterical laugh, "the screaming little thing would drive Monsieur Jacquemin's head wild."

"Canaries do not scream," said Madame Legrand, "they sing, but as this one does not sing and has never sung, it could not make Monsieur Jacquemin's head ache."

But Monsieur Jacquemin liked birds in a pie, and peremptorily declined the canary. In this Monsieur Laurent confirmed him.

"Animals, my dear sir," he said feelingly, "would sour your temper, gardening is the thing. You have a garden, — sow, reap, dig, and you will be a happy man. Let me send you down some choice flowers."

"I do not like flowers," growled Monsieur Jacquemin.

Madame Bonnet, too, had her panacea. Why not adopt some interesting and sweet-tempered child; not an orphan — you never know what kind of parents an orphan had; swindlers and thieves perhaps — but a child "whose parents, honest, respectable people, were still alive — and which," she sentimentally added, "would prove the staff and comfort of his old age."

This had nearly settled it. "Old age indeed! did Madame Bonnet think Monsieur Jacquemin was going to make his will? No, no, not just yet. Thank Heaven, he was hale and hearty, and would bury them all."

In short, the plain truth of the matter was that Monsieur Jacquemin liked private dinners best; that he disliked animals, did not care about flowers, and never having had any children of his own, detested the children of other people: Madame Bonnet's included. He felt, besides, all the rich man's aversion

to an heir; and constantly refused to see his poor relations, lest they should think of his will.

These were the individuals whom Tancredi P. Mathieu had resolved to civilize, and for that praiseworthy purpose he got an introduction to one of Madame Jacquemin's soirées. At once his eagle eye detected the awful amount of narrow-minded dulness of that little circle. The old ladies were busy at their worsted work; Monsieur Laurent and Madame Legrand were quarrelling over a game of piquet; the melancholy De Lorrains were engaged with dominoes; Monsieur Jacquemin was displaying his hospitality by compelling his guests to swallow down immense quantities of cakes and lemonade; and Monsieur Bonnet sat apart, wrapped in his own moody thoughts, which he occasionally condescended to impart to some eager listener.

"Only a few friends," said Madame Jacquemin, smiling graciously on Tancredi, "a few homely friends who meet here three times a week to chat, to talk, to play a few odd games."

"Squirrels!" sententiously said Tancredi.

"Squirrels!" echoed Madame Jacquemin, amazed.

"Squirrels in a cage," repeated Tancredi, "turning round and round, doing the same things over and over again."

"Dear me, how very odd," said Madame Jacquemin, and raising her voice, she added, "Monsieur Tancredi Mathieu declares we are all squirrels."

This strange speech completed the sensation which Tancredi's long hair, pointed hat, and white kid gloves had begun. He saw his advantage, and casting a magnetic look — at least he said so afterwards — over

the whole assembly, he followed up this first success with considerable effect.

He scarcely opened his lips, and was thought a prodigious wit. He seemed to entertain the most thorough contempt for the whole world, the individuals around him included; and they all agreed in audible whispers that he was a very superior sort of person — quite a genius: great geniuses always despise the world. Although both piquet and dominoes were neglected, the evening passed away with amazing swiftness. Every one had gathered around the stranger, who opened his mouth every ten minutes, and delivered some oracular sentence, received by his hearers with the utmost gravity.

From that day Tancredi P. Mathieu became the acknowledged lion of the Jacquemin soirées, and of the Marais, which had never known a lion before. He was the object of every one's admiration: the De Lorrains alone looked upon him with a suspicious eye; they had an instinctive consciousness of a foe.

True, Tancredi did not even bestow a thought upon them, but, like many remarkable individuals, he showed an early inclination to tyranny, and betrayed certain destructive propensities, which threatened to break upon the quiet monotony of the bourgeois circle. Being, as he expressed it himself, of a spiritual nature, he animadverted in strong terms against the material custom of eating in the evening.

"Intellectual food is the thing," he loftily said to Madame Jacquemin. "Intellectual food and no other. That alone purifies and exalts."

Madame Jacquemin felt the cogency of this reasoning, and as she considered Tancredi an oracle in mat-

ters of taste, she hastened to suppress the refreshments and sweets she had hitherto caused to be freely handed round to her guests.

Having thus victoriously asserted the triumph of mind over matter, Tancredi next succeeded in banishing both piquet and dominoes.

"In no intellectual assembly should such idle toys be admitted," he said to Madame Jacquemin. And piquet and dominoes vanished.

Madame Legrand and Monsieur Laurent, who had quarrelled over the former game for the last twenty years, both loudly protested against this new arrangement, but as their quarrels were only pleasant to themselves, every one agreed that piquet deserved its fate.

Having thus deprived his disciples of their old amusements, our hero felt it his duty to provide them with others in their stead. A piano accordingly made its appearance in Madame Jacquemin's drawing-room. It is true nobody could play upon it — not even Tancredi; but that was evidently of little consequence, for towards the close of a very dull evening he rose, and after vainly beseeching one of the accomplished ladies present to accompany him, at last sung, unaccompanied, but still standing near the silent piano, a pathetic Italian song, in which he bewailed his unhappy fate; for, as he afterwards condescendingly informed the company — who had not understood a single word — he was a forsaken and despairing lover. After thus initiating them to the charms of melody, Tancredi resolved to let them into sublimer mysteries, and accordingly fixed an evening, on which he proposed to read to Madame Jacquemin's guests a series of sonnets, which he

had composed several years before, "On the Prospect of being Compelled by my Father to become a Grocer." This, it must be confessed, was a little poetical fiction, in which Tancredi had considered himself at liberty to indulge. Nothing was ever further from M. Mathieu's thoughts than to compel his son to anything he disliked, though he certainly had attempted to achieve, by persuasion, the profanation above alluded to.

The evening came, the company gathered around him, and Tancredi began his reading: he persevered for upwards of two hours, without manifesting the least symptom of fatigue. When he had finished, he looked up, and found himself alone, comparatively speaking. M. Jacquemin was fast asleep; the old ladies were nodding over their worsted work; Madame Jacquemin had early effected her escape, with several female friends; M. Laurent and M. Bonnet shook their heads, and exchanged ominous glances; the six De Lorrains alone were wide awake, looking at our hero with their fixed stony eyes, whilst their cadaverous and melancholy faces expressed the most absolute determination to sit out both him and his poetry. To increase the dismal appearance of the scene, the fire had gone out, the candles burned dimly, and wanted snuffing, whilst the loud snoring which proceeded from the vast arm-chair in which M. Jacquemin lay, rather marred the melody of the poet's verses. "I see they are not in a sufficiently advanced state of civilization to appreciate the beauties of poetry," thought Tancredi, as he looked upon his audience: "I must form their political principles."

Unfortunately for the execution of this project, it happened that both M. Bonnet and M. Laurent had of

late conceived strange notions of Tancredi's political character. His foreign name did not sound quite orthodox in their ear; then his pointed hat, shirt collar, and flowing locks, struck them as being something portentous in their way. Philosophers well know what great meanings sometimes lie hidden under trifles. As to his poetical readings, they had a revolutionary air, in direct opposition to the old school of poetry, and also, they strongly suspected, to the established order of things. Who could tell of whom Tancredi Mathieu might be the agent, or what was going on in the bosom of the hitherto peaceful Marais? Nay, for all they knew, his pretended Italian love-song might be some revolutionary Marseillaise hymn, or *ça ira*, speciously clothed under a foreign garb! In short, the employé of the war-office and the horticultural amateur both agreed it was high time to keep their eye upon Tancredi, whom they began to consider as a dangerous political character.

Under these favourable circumstances our hero began his political campaign. He had not yet exactly determined upon the doctrines he meant to inculcate, but he concluded that he would soon find this out; and as he was not a little elated with the success of his previous efforts, he began his attack in the spirit of true knight errantry, dealing out his blows right and left, without much minding where they fell.

"Sir," he said one evening to Monsieur Jacquemin, "this state of things cannot last. Society is wrong, radically wrong. A day will come, sir, when the rich will have to surrender their ill-gotten gold to the poor: and then, beautiful result: there will be no poor and no rich."

"No poor and no rich!" gasped Monsieur Jacquemin, growing purple, "and do you mean to say, sir, that thieves will come and rob me, sir?"

"I make no particular applications of the system," placidly replied Tancredi, "I merely state what will be."

"Well, sir, let them only attempt it," said Monsieur Jacquemin, "let them only try it, ha! ha! — that is all I say."

"Try it!" said Monsieur Bonnet, "no, no, they have other work in hand with Abd-el-Kader."

"I admire Abd-el-Kader," thoughtfully ejaculated Tancredi. "He is a hero and a patriot. Besides, what is that puny warfare in Algeria? We shall have a European war before long."

"He admires Abd-el-Kader!" gasped Monsieur Bonnet, unable to say more. Horticulture Tancredi did not, however, admire. He openly expressed his contempt for it to Monsieur Laurent, and plainly said it would be done away with under the new state of things.

"Oh! ho!" said Monsieur Laurent, with a sneer; "and how will the world get on without geraniums or roses? *I should like to know that!*"

"Sir," replied Tancredi, with an ominous look, "there are spirits, blighted spirits, for which deadly nightshade, and hemlock itself, have more attractions than all the roses of Syria."

"What a villain!" muttered Monsieur Laurent.

To Madame Legrand Tancredi made no predictions; but this lady he had long mortally offended beyond all hope of reconciliation, by expressing his ardent desire of seeing every dog hung, and every canary bird shot

through the heart; in support of which philanthropic wish he had adduced so many plausible arguments, that the good lady felt convinced that if ever the Young France party prevailed, her menagerie was doomed.

"I know it is Monsieur Laurent's doing," she said to one of the De Lorrains, by whom she was sitting. "I know that man —"

A fearful scream interrupted her. One of the old ladies had gone into fits, and this was no sooner perceived by the other old ladies, her friends, than, out of mere sympathy, they followed her example. Awful was the confusion that followed; Madame Jacquemin was pretty well frightened out of her wits; Tancredi, who had caused all this hubbub, stood and looked on, smiling and triumphant.

"Good Heavens! what has happened?" exclaimed Madame Legrand. One of the De Lorrains rose to learn, and soon came back with the tidings.

"Dreadful!" she said. "You know Mademoiselle du Rocher's family were all guillotined in the terror?"

"Well!" eagerly exclaimed Madame Legrand.

"Well, this wretch goes up to her and says: 'Madame, do you know that I am wonderfully like Robespierre?' Upon which the poor thing looks at him, and perceiving the likeness, screams and faints."

"Monster!" said Madame Legrand. She spoke loud enough for Tancredi to hear. He acknowledged the epithet with a gracious smile, and left the place at Madame Jacquemin's request.

"If she sees you," said that lady, "she will certainly relapse. Pray go."

Tancredi left delighted with this crowning exploit.

With this tact and discrimination did he endeavour to civilize the bourgeois of the Marais: the succession of petty storms and alarms he raised must be left to the imagination of the reader. It is true that, had the worthy citizens known anything about either Tancredi P. Mathieu, or the Young France party, they would have been conscious that the former was the most harmless of human beings, and from the latter there was little or nothing to be apprehended. The Young France party, with their kid gloves and hair carefully curled, were no doubt the fit apostles of a revolution, but by such revolutions are not generally made. But fear reasons not: Tancredi's words were received as gospel truth, and pretty work they soon made in the Marais.

The dragon's teeth were not sown in vain: quarrels sprung on every side. Madame Bonnet took it into her head to sympathise with Abd-el-Kader, who became the subject of daily dissensions between her and her husband. A new and deadly feud sprang up between Monsieur Laurent and Madame Legrand, the former of whom avowed that in consequence of Tancredi's disastrous teaching, his finest flower-beds were ruined by the widow's dogs. Rendered desperate by one of those melancholy events, and recalling to mind Tancredi's denunciations against pets of every description, Monsieur Laurent, having provided himself with tackle and a fishing-rod, exercised his vengeance on one of Madame Legrand's unoffending golden fishes, by actually fishing it up through his bed-room window. The unhappy lady, who, hearing a suspicious noise against the highest window panes, had rushed to the rescue, only arrived in time to see her finny favourite

whisked up in the air, and vanishing into the enemy's precincts. Her first act was to snatch in her remaining treasures, who, quite unconscious of their companion's fate, were still gaily swimming along their narrow domain; the next was to scream for help, and then faint away in good earnest. When she recovered, she found herself surrounded by condoling friends; but nothing could soothe her wounded spirit. She declared that she never should forgive M. Laurent, against whom she vowed eternal hatred and vengeance.

But even greater evils — all springing from the same source — menaced the guests of M. Jacquemin. The worthy dyer, on whom Tancredi's speeches had made a profound impression began to entertain serious fears for his safety. Lest his reputation of being a wealthy man should bring him into trouble, he determined to reduce his expenditure; and, as a first step, talked of discontinuing to take in the daily papers, and stopping the soirées altogether. This announcement spread a panic throughout the whole street. M. Jacquemin's house had become a place of public entertainment, which his guests had no inclination to find closed upon them. In this dilemma a general council was held; private dissensions were for a while forgotten, and it was unanimously resolved to strike at the root of the evil, and banish Tancredi P. Mathieu. The gaunt De Lorrains, who alone had from the beginning perceived the impending danger, proposed to signalize him to the mayor of the arrondissement as a dangerous individual; M. Bonnet offered to say a few words at the war-office; M. Laurent to give him a delicate hint in the language of flowers; Madame Legrand proposed a night attack on his person; and the old

ladies were for handling him over to the public executioner at once. But Madame Jacquemin rejected all these plans as too violent and inhospitable, and resolved to intimate to him, as politely as possible, that if he chose to continue his visits, it must no longer be on his own terms, but on hers. Accordingly, when Tancredi came as usual to one of the evening soirées, his head full of mighty plans of poetical, social, and political reform, he could not, notwithstanding his abstraction, but notice that a great change had taken place. The piano, which had only been hired for a month, had vanished; M. Laurent and Madame Legrand were quarrelling over piquet to their heart's content; the De Lorrains, who were eating cakes and drinking lemonade, eyed him with defiance; dominoes were reëstablished in their supremacy; and the old ladies were as triumphantly engaged in worsted-work as on the night of his first appearance amongst them.

One glance told Tancredi that the bourgeois of the Marais had rebelled: his authority was no longer acknowledged; he was virtually dethroned. Even the most energetic minds must sometimes yield to the might of fate: thus it was with our hero. Vanquished, but unsubdued in spirit, he nevertheless saw the uselessness of resistance. Casting a glance of withering scorn on his late disciples, he spake not a word, but turned upon his heel, and left the drawing-room of Madame Jacquemin, inwardly passing the fatal fiat, "for ever." With signal ingratitude, every one uttered an exclamation of triumph on witnessing his exit. The remainder of the evening was spent in perfect enjoyment — harmony seemed quite restored; and it is averred that, notwithstanding the late painful circum-

stances that had occurred, the quarrels of M. Laurent and the fair widow were marked by unusual amenity.

The day after his defeat, Tancredi wrote to Charlemagne Champion a letter of seven pages, in which he related, with great seeming bitterness of spirit, his vain attempt to civilize a parcel of barbarians, and instil into their uncultivated minds a love of the fine arts, and a sound political creed. He ended by exclaiming against the cruelty of mankind, that would not allow him one moment's repose; and as he had little doubt that the malice of his antagonists would drive them to every extremity, spoke of exiling himself in some remote solitude, where his wounded spirit might perhaps at last find rest!

By return of post he received the following answer:

"DEAR TANCREDI,

"I am by no means astonished at your failure; you have met with a fate common to all great spirits; you ought not, therefore, to mourn, but to rejoice. Had you, however, consulted me on the subject, I could have foretold exactly what has happened. Whatever you do, never again attempt to civilize bourgeois. They are very worthy people in their way, but singularly obstinate. They like to enjoy themselves according to their own stupid old-fashioned manner. As they are fast disappearing from the surface of the land, it is only an act of mercy to allow them to live unmolested. Henceforth heed them not, but turn all your efforts and energies on the rising generation. Give up the thought of going into exile; talents like yours should not be wasted away in a desert.

"Your devoted

"CHARLEMAGNE CHAMPION."

But Tancredi was bent on being a persecuted man, and once in his life, at least, an exile. He announced to his father his intention of leaving the country for some time. Monsieur Mathieu the elder heard him with much more composure than, from the painful nature of the communication, might have been expected; he even remarked that travelling would do his son good, and seemed to view the whole affair as one of minor importance. It was in vain that Tancredi endeavoured to impress upon his mind that he was going to leave his country perhaps for ever. Monsieur Mathieu persisted in asserting that he was only going to travel, and very calmly bade him farewell.

In a few days Tancredi left Paris for Geneva. We will not dwell on the agonizing nature of his feelings when, having passed the frontier, he beheld from the diligence window the blue hills of his country — his native hills, as, forgetting his Parisian birth, he called them — vanish from his view. For three months he wandered on the shores of Lake Lemman, and indulged in misanthropic reflections on the folly and ingratitude of mankind. At the expiration of that term — during which he had been, to say the truth, the prey to intolerable ennui — he gladly hastened back to Paris, without, however, informing his father of his intention. On a fine summer evening he bent his steps towards his father's house in the Marais: he still wore his pointed hat, and a travelling cloak enveloped his person; a porter who followed him carried his luggage. Without allowing himself to be announced, Tancredi, who loved dramatic effect, rushed into the parlour, where his father was seated reading the newspaper, and throwing back his cloak, discovered himself to

the ex-grocer's astonished sight. Good Monsieur Mathieu laid down the paper instantly, and uttered a very deep hem; but as he was not what is called a very nervous man, he did not seem otherwise affected, but kindly welcomed his son; and seeing that he looked as rosy and happy as ever, immediately gave orders for a substantial supper. Tancredi, who was rapturously gazing through the window on the starlit sky of his native city, of course heard or heeded nothing of those material concerns; "his spirit was far away."

"Well, Pierre, how did you like Geneva?" asked Monsieur Mathieu, turning towards his son, whom he never called Tancredi.

"All places are alike; he is everywhere alone," moodily answered his son in the words of Lamennais.

M. Mathieu, who saw that Tancredi was still bent on being wretched, remained silent, and took up his newspaper once more.

"I suppose," resumed Tancredi after a brief pause, "the malignancy of their hatred is unabated?"

"Of whom are you speaking?" inquired his father with seeming surprise.

"Of M. Jacquemin, his wife, and all those whose ingratitude made me fly my native land."

"Oh, they are very well, thank you; they were all inquiring after you only last week."

"I know they hate me; yet I wish them no evil," replied Tancredi, with the resignation of a martyr. "I earnestly hope they are happy?"

"They are indeed quite happy," answered his father.

Tancredi smiled incredulously. "How can they be

happy," he exclaimed, "when they are a prey to all the evil passions that disturb mankind? I endeavoured to reclaim and civilize them; I failed in the attempt, but I cannot think them happy!"

"Well," said his father, quietly, "since you went to Geneva I have seen a good deal more of them: I at first found them much irritated against you."

"Ha! I knew it!" triumphantly exclaimed Tancredi.

"But I soon succeeded in pacifying them," continued his father, without heeding the interruption. Tancredi looked as though he could have gladly dispensed with this instance of paternal solicitude.

"I, moreover, tried to make them happy; not perhaps according to the best manner, but according to that best suited to them."

Tancredi's features expressed unqualified surprise: he seemed to wait for something else, but his father remaining silent, he at last said: "Well, sir, I suppose, by making them happy, you mean making them better?" M. Mathieu nodded affirmatively. "If so," continued his son, "pray how did you rid M. Jacquemin of his intolerable selfishness and sordid love of wealth?"

"M. Jacquemin," quietly answered the father, "is, as you say, selfish, and fond of money; but he is no miser: he has no objection to spend large sums, provided it is to please himself. Had I advised him, as you did, to divide the wealth he did not need amongst the poor, he would have looked upon me as a madman. When he complained to me of his great ennui, I advised him to settle in business some of his poor nephews and nieces, whom he had always refused to

see, lest they should expect anything from him. He at first seemed very much opposed to this plan; but when I reminded him that after his death his fortune must belong to his relations, who would perhaps squander it away, and that it would be more pleasant for him to dispose of it, according to his own fancy, during his lifetime, he quite agreed with me, and immediately took steps to place his eldest nephew in a dyer's business, which he takes great delight in superintending. He has likewise provided for his other relations, with whom he occasionally quarrels, but towards whom he, nevertheless, behaves with much real kindness. He still takes in the papers, and has not discontinued the soirées; but as he now has little leisure, he is glad to lend out the former to his friends, and enjoys the relaxation of the latter much more than formerly: he is, upon the whole, a happier and a better man."

"Humph!" almost contemptuously exclaimed Tancredi. "I had embraced all humanity in my plan; yours, I perceive, is confined to making a few persons happy."

"It is at least the more practicable of the two," replied his father.

"And I suppose," continued Tancredi, "that you also succeeded in reconciling M. Laurent and Madame Legrand; who, with their insufferable love of flowers, and animals, and mutual antipathy, were enough to destroy all harmony wherever they appeared?"

"I did not endeavour to reconcile them," answered M. Mathieu; "but when M. Laurent informed me of all he had to suffer from his neighbour the widow, I advised him to marry her, upon which he told me in

confidence that he had been thinking of it for the last ten years, and without waiting for a reply, launched out into her praises. In short, it ended by his requesting me to be the bearer of a letter to her, as he averred that he could not summon up courage to address her himself. I consented to undertake this task. On reading the letter, which was a very long one, Madame Legrand became greatly agitated, said something about a golden fish, but at last declared that she forgave him everything."

"But they are not actually married!" exclaimed Tancredi.

"They have been so for the last six weeks," replied M. Mathieu.

"And do you mean to say," asked his son, "that they no longer quarrel?"

"On the contrary, they quarrel every day; but as it may be safely asserted that it is more from the force of habit than from any other motive, they can be said to agree very well upon the whole. Very little is changed in their existence. They live in the same house; Madame Laurent still occupies the second-floor with her animals, and M. Laurent the third with his flowers; they enjoy their game of piquet, and its accompanying squabble, every evening; and it is my firm belief that their greatest cause of complaint against you was the attempt you made to deprive them of that pleasure."

Tancredi turned up his eyes to the ceiling, and in a tone full of indignation, began, "Who will attempt to fathom the duplicity of man? Who —" Here he became suddenly silent, either overwhelmed by the vastness of the subject of his question, or induced to

hold his peace by the aspect of the supper on the table.

Several days elapsed before Tancredi could be induced to accompany his father on a visit to M. Jacquemin. He at last expressed his consent, by declaring himself "ready to face his enemies." His father, who had learned to understand his enigmatical mode of speech, required no more. They accordingly called on the retired dyer the same evening: the Bonnets, Laurents, and De Lorrains, were all present; they seemed delighted to see our hero, and received him with the greatest cordiality. When his father commented on this circumstance, Tancredi smiled bitterly, and muttered something about the serpent being hidden by flowers. But the truth was, that since M. Mathieu had given M. Jacquemin's guests to understand that his son's mind had been somewhat disturbed by certain visions, prevalent amongst the youth of France, their anger had been turned into pity, which they now openly expressed. But of this Tancredi saw, or would see, nothing: they had hated him three months back, they must hate him still; and with this soothing unction to his wounded pride, he endeavoured to comfort himself.

Several years have elapsed, and no important change has occurred in the bosom of the little society we have attempted to portray. M. Jacquemin has forgotten the name of ennui since he followed his friend M. Mathieu's advice; his poor relations are in a thriving condition, and seem to feel much gratitude for his kindness. M. Bonnet still menaces his friends with an impending European war; but it has been noticed that they have now become quite accustomed to the pre-

diction. Madame Bonnet, whose thoughts are all bent on matrimonial alliances for her daughters, has entirely forgotten Abd-el-Kader. M. and Madame Laurent quarrel less every day; it is strongly suspected by their friends that the time will come at last when they will not quarrel at all! The only great event which has occurred concerns the De Lorrains; it seems that, after all, they were immensely rich. A law-suit, which lasted for several years, had prevented them from entering into the enjoyment of their fortune. The old hotel is shut up: its inhabitants have removed to a fashionable neighbourhood, where they live in style, and keep their carriage. Circumstances have wonderfully altered their outward appearance. They all have quite a bold and prosperous air. They frequently invite their former patrons to their parties; but either the Jacquemin set are hurt at the long deception practised upon them, or they have not yet made up their minds to forgive the De Lorrains their sudden and unexpected prosperity; for, with the exception of the first invitation, which they only accepted out of curiosity, they have declined all other requests, taking in high dudgeon the splendour of the entertainment offered to them. It is, nevertheless, suspected that they will relent in time, if not for their own sakes, at least for that of their children, to whom, as Madame Bonnet observes, they will, of course, feel desirous of securing the comfort of a rich acquaintance. But Madame Laurent, who still entertains a grudge against her neighbour, declares that she has other designs on the De Lorrains, and is determined to keep her eye upon her. We must not forget to record that several of the old ladies have been cut away by the remorseless hand

of death. It is 'worthy of notice, that those who still survive have never been able to forget Tancredi's unlucky likeness to Robespierre; they evidently look upon this circumstance as very suspicious.

This brings us naturally to our hero. Of him we have very little to say. He is, to all appearance, as rosy, and happy-looking, and miserable in reality as ever. His father, nevertheless, asserts that he has of late manifested symptoms of change. His hat is not quite so pointed, his shirt collar is no longer Byronian, and his hair has actually been cropped quite close by the neighbouring hair-dresser, who declares that he only followed his positive orders. But what looks more ominous still is, that the name of Tancredi has vanished from his cards, which now only bear plain P. Mathieu. Whatever may be the causes of this change — and whether it is to be attributed to his failure in not being able to become a persecuted man, or whether there is some other motive for it — it seems, nevertheless, very probable that a crisis in P. Mathieu's character is at hand. Some persons have been found who begin to think, like his father, that he may, after all, settle down into a sober, sensible individual: a supposition the more probable, that he actually has been heard to talk of marrying and entering into business; and that, after all, his youthful follies were more fit subjects for good-humoured ridicule than for real apprehensions — a remark which many individuals have actually applied to the Young France party itself.

ADRIEN.

IN a gloomy and winding street of the cité there stands an old crazy-looking house seven stories high, which appears to have been most uncomfortably squeezed and narrowed up by its more modern neighbours, and has upon the whole an insecure and tottering air. The gate of this house, as in all the poorer dwellings, stands ever open for the convenience of the numerous lodgers; beyond it extends a low cellar-like arch, which terminates with a glimpse of an old pump in a damp, grass-grown yard; on the left of the arch exists a dark hole — the lodge wherein dwells a cross old portress, who has, not unnaturally, contracted a dark and misanthropical view of the world. Night and day a lamp is always burning in that lodge, whilst a dull, glimmering ray of light, descending from a high and remote window, reveals the winding staircase which leads to the various floors of the house.

It was in a garret, situated on the last of these seven stories, that there lived, a few years ago, an orphan lad named Adrien, and his grandmother, an old weak-minded peasant woman, who still appeared as great stranger to Paris and Parisian life as when she entered for the first time the capital of France. To the humble abode of this obscure couple we will now introduce the reader. The room was indeed a mere

garret, scarcely more than eight feet square, with low ceiling and slanting walls; but though narrow and bare, it was neat and clean. The *lit de sangle*, or framed canvass, so common amongst those of the Parisian poor who cannot afford room for a bedstead, was folded up with its thin mattress against the wall; the lame deal table had been most scrupulously scrubbed; no dust or stain appeared on the red-tiled flooring; a few battered kitchen utensils which hung on the walls were placed with a sort of regard to symmetry; a piece of broken looking-glass adorned the mantel-shelf; near it was suspended a five sous portrait of Napoleon, under which had been placed, as if in homage, a blooming pot of the modest flower known amongst us as the *mignonette*, but which in France is generally called *réséda*. A golden sunbeam which streamed in through the narrow and open window, and fell on the little broken mirror, brightened the whole place with its joyous and cheerful light.

Near that window now sat in a rickety arm-chair Adrien's grandmother, attired in her peasant's dress of short and striped woollen petticoat, blue jacket, and headgear consisting of a printed calico kerchief. Without expressing either ill health or physical infirmity, the old woman's sunburnt features betrayed a mental helplessness, painful to behold as she sat there with her hands folded on her knees, watching listlessly every motion of her active grandson. With his shrewd intelligent countenance, dark curly hair, and well knit, though diminutive frame, he was only fifteen, Adrien offered a very favourable specimen of the Parisian gamin. The confident bearing, decisive attitudes, and frank good-humoured accent, revealed at once a true

son of Paris. The lad was now in a state of great bustle and preparation — lighting a charcoal fire, heating a pan over it, melting dripping, peeling onions, singing snatches of songs in spite of his smarting eyes, throwing the onions into the pan when the dripping had reached frying heat, and, in short, preparing that favourite French dish — onion soup, which ere long was smoking on the table in an old earthenware tureen.

“Come, grandmother,” said Adrien, in a cheerful tone, “breakfast is ready;” and he closed his eyes and smacked his lips as he inhaled the curling vapour which rose from his plate. “How rich it looks,” he added, admiringly. “Upon my word of honour, I know nothing better for a working man than a dish of onion soup.”

The old woman, without seeming to share his enthusiasm, cast a dreary look on the dark liquid, and partook of it very slowly. Not even the manly, swaggering tone with which Adrien concluded his speech had power to rouse her. It is true she was accustomed to it. When they first began to live together a few months before, she had indeed wondered with a dreamy sort of perplexity on whose side the mistake lay, when she thought Adrien a boy, and he evidently considered himself a man; but his cool, decisive manner had promptly laid the matter at rest, and she would now as soon have dreamed of doubting her own identity, as of questioning his authority and experience.

“Well, what shall we have for dinner?” said Adrien, who had finished his soup, and, balancing himself back on his chair with his hands thrust into his pockets, was now watching the old woman.

"Let us have a stew of mutton and haricots, Adrien," she promptly replied.

"Grandmother," said he, impressively, "I only earn six francs (five shillings) a week."

"Well then a cabbage soup, with a good piece of bacon in it."

"Bacon is horribly dear; but if you like the cabbage without it —"

"No, I don't," was the snappish answer.

"I should propose sorrel soup," continued Adrien, "but it is no good without eggs, which we cannot afford; or bean soup if we had only got beans, which we have not. Do you know," he confidentially added, "that we have some dripping," his eyes fell on an earthen pot standing in the corner of the room, "and plenty of onions," he glanced at a bunch hanging from a nail on the wall; "do you know I think we could not do better than to have a good, hot, smoking tureenful of onion soup."

"Onion soup!" indignantly exclaimed the old woman; "why we have had onion soup all the week; Adrien," she pathetically added, "do you mean to say we must live on onion soup?" Adrien looked embarrassed, but he resolutely replied:

"Yes, grandmother, we must — if we cannot help it."

"Onion soup made with dripping, too," she mournfully added, rocking herself to and fro, "and never even a drop of wine."

"Grandmother," observed her grandson, very gravely, and pausing in his task of clearing away the breakfast things, "you *know* Paris wine gives you the headache. You remember," he added, in a lower tone,

"how strangely you behaved when that wicked Madame Mitron, next door, persuaded you to go with her to the barrier. No, no, wine is not good for *you*. It excites you," said he, after seeming at a loss for the proper word, "it excites you."

"And to live in such a garret!" she continued, without heeding him.

"Garret!" he echoed, glancing admiringly round him; "why, have you not a good warm bed?"

"Yes, Adrien, but you sleep on the floor."

"I prefer it," he hastily replied; "it is more wholesome, you see. And then," he resumed; "have you not got a portrait of the Emperor, and a looking-glass, and a pot of *réséda*, and the sun that comes in every morning; and always plenty of bread and soup to eat?"

"Onion soup, Adrien."

"Add to which advantage," said Adrien, summing up, "that you have nothing to do but to walk about Paris all day long, or, if you prefer staying at home, to look out of the window and enjoy yourself."

"And look at the smoky chimney-pots," replied the old woman, despondingly.

"Grandmother, I wonder at you! You know that you have only to place the table near the window — mind the broken foot though — and put a chair on the table, and get up on the chair yourself, in order to have the finest view possible of the towers of Notre Dame."

But a prospect of the Paris cathedral, though thus obtained, did not seem to comfort Adrien's old relative. She did not like Notre Dame; it was too large and gloomy; she wanted the little, white, sunny church of

her own village; she wanted that village itself, with its comfortable dwellings and well-stored larders, and abundance of all good things. Paris was a drear, dismal place, and Paris she would leave.

"Impossible," interposed Adrien. "In the first place, you know you have no one to go back to in your own village, as you call it; but even if you had," he added, with an important air, "I could not allow you to go."

The old woman looked up quite bewildered. "You do not mean to say, Adrien, that you would keep me here against my will?"

"Yes, I do. Come," said he, sitting down by her, and speaking with sudden gravity, "you know — for you were by — and it is not long ago, what my poor father said to me on his death-bed, 'Adrien, my boy,' said he, 'I am going away; God bless you; be an honest working man; pay your way and take care of your poor old grandmother.' Now," observed Adrien, after a little pause, "an honest working man I believe I am; my way I have paid till now; we are not like old Madame Mitron, who drinks all she has, never pays her rent, and looks another way when she passes before the sour old portress's lodge; we can look the landlord himself straight in the face, grandmother; but that is not all, and I should not have done my father's will if I did not take care of you; so you see you must remain with me. After all I do earn six francs a week."

"You are a good lad, Adrien," exclaimed his grandmother, sobbing and throwing her arms around his neck in a sudden revulsion of feeling.

"Nay," said he, with gravity, "I only do my duty as an honest man, you know."

By this time it was getting late; and, as Adrien said, quite time for him to be gone to his work. But whilst completing his preparations — for he was extremely neat and careful of his person — he undertook to administer consolations to his grandmother, whose tears were still flowing.

"Come, grandmother, don't cry, we all have our troubles. If you knew what we carpenters have to endure; and if one happens to be short, what advantage is taken of it. Look at that Grand Jean, who, because he is six foot high, cannot meet one on the staircase without talking of tom-tits. Ah, grandmother, if it were not for you —," and a significant and ominous frown gathered over the boy's smooth brow as he spoke.

"Holy virgin!" screamed the old woman, "you don't think, Adrien, of attacking that big, tall man?"

"No, indeed, I do not," gravely answered her grandson; "I hope I know my duty to you better. Why, suppose Jean and I were to have an affair, and I to hit him, and hurt him, I should certainly be sent to prison; and then," he pathetically added, "then, what would become of you?" Adrien seemed overwhelmed with emotion at the idea. But he was now quite ready; so slinging his basket of tools over his shoulder, he embraced his grandmother, and hesitatingly observed, "if old Madame Mitron should try and lure you to the barrier, grandmother, you will not go?"

"No," she slowly replied.

"You know," he said, colouring as he alluded to his old relative's secret infirmity, "that wine excites

you. I shall be back at two," he continued after a pause, "so pray try and have the onion soup ready."

The name of this unlucky dish immediately brought a cloud over the old woman's brow, and as he closed the door, Adrien heard her muttering "onion soup!" indignantly.

Scarcely had Adrien issued on the landing, when a door opposite gently opened, and afforded him a glimpse of a very red and pimpled face. "So old Mitron wants to see me out before she begins her tricks with poor grandmother," thought Adrien. Madame Mitron, seeing herself discovered, no longer affected concealment, and nodding at Adrien, with what he considered a most insolent familiarity, for he was apt to be wonderfully ticklish on small points of dignity, cavalierly addressed him with a "Bonjour, Adrien."

"Bonjour, Madame," he loftily replied; "allow me to observe that you might say, Monsieur Adrien."

"Pray, how long have we called ourselves Monsieur Adrien?" she asked, with a sneer; and Madame Mitron burst into a fit of laughter which shook her dropsical frame. "Very amusing," she observed, when her merriment was over; and she clapped the door in his face. Adrien disliked Madame Mitron, and not without a cause; "she was always," he said, "endeavouring to corrupt his innocent grandmother, luring her to the barrier, where she got excited with adulterated wine." He was sure his grandmother was no drunkard; she was only new to Paris, and to the necessity of living on six francs a week. If she would only believe *him* when he assured her they were very comfortable upon the whole. But she would persist in preferring butter

to dripping, meat to onion soup, and wine to water! Foolish grandmother! But he loved her for all that, and even with a sort of pride; she has been very handsome, he often thought, as he looked admiringly at her sunburnt and wrinkled features, where to no other eyes would a trace of beauty have been visible. Then on a Sunday, when she donned her holiday gear, and they went out together, how he admired her with her high white cap, the gold cross suspended from her neck, and the short and full petticoat of flaring pattern. They might have been so happy, but for Madame Mitron; why did that weak grandmother yield to her wicked advice and entrust her with a gold cross and little articles of country finery, which, through her agency, were speedily converted into barrier banquets? And to think that, after causing all this mischief, Madame Mitron should presume to insult him!

This was not destined to be Adrien's only tribulation on this unlucky morning; at a turn of the staircase he suddenly found himself face to face with Grand Jean. Grand Jean was a big, heavy, good-tempered working man, a native of the mountains of Auvergne, who resided in the same house with Adrien; the lad's pretensions to equality seemed to afford him infinite amusement whenever they met, but when fiery little Adrien attempted to annoy and provoke him in his turn, the colossal Jean evidently considered the joke rich beyond description. He now gave him a good-humoured nod and smile, for he liked the lad in his heart, and greeted him with, "and how are *we* getting on this fine morning, Adrien?"

"Very well," replied Adrien, in a sharp tone, and with a peculiarly defiant jerk of his head; "please to

allow me to pass," he imperatively added, for the burly form of Jean obstructed the narrow staircase.

"Of course," said Jean; and, without standing on one side, he raised his arm horizontally, apparently intimating that Adrien was welcome to pass underneath it. Truth compels us to declare that he could have done so without the greatest inconvenience.

"Sir!" said Adrien, colouring to the very temples.

"So we are getting in a pet, as usual," benignantly remarked Grand Jean, making room for him, and gently patting him on the head as he spoke.

"Sir!" cried Adrien, in a shriller tone, and pulling his cap over his eyebrows, for he was perfectly exasperated; but Jean, with provoking indifference and good-humour, continued to ascend the staircase, merely turning round to give Adrien a last friendly nod as he vanished from his sight.

"It is better to bear it quietly, for the sake of grandmother," heroically observed Adrien to himself; but he swallowed the affront very unwillingly, and considered himself an extremely ill-used individual. And, indeed, was he quite fairly treated? Left on his own resources whilst still a boy, he had to support himself and his old relative; nay, even to control her conduct, and assume all the duties and responsibilities of a man; but he was expected to do this without taking any of the state and dignity of the character he had to sustain. Fortunately for Adrien, he did not behold the matter in this light. His self-delusion with regard to his own importance was without the alloy of a doubt, and he ascribed to individual perverseness the occasional mortifications he endured. But as these mortifications were highly unpleasant, and as the best

of us must occasionally indulge in some trifling weakness, Adrien, in order to soothe his wounded pride, now thought fit to pause before the misanthropical portress's lodge — that dark hole where the lamp, like the sacred fire on the altar of Vesta, was kept ever burning; and, thrusting in his head, to observe with a condescending nod and gracious smile: "And how are *we* getting on to-day, Mère Moreau?"

The old portress, who was skimming her soup near the fire, looked up with mute surprise, and for one moment the ladle paused in its office; but before she could recover from the amazement into which this audacious intrusion had thrown her, Adrien vanished. This little ebullition of vanity restored him at once to his usual equanimity of temper. He left the dingy old house, singing like a lark, and went down the winding street in the best possible humour with himself and the whole world.

At two exactly the gay little Adrien reappeared under the cellar-like arch, and he was hastening up the gloomy staircase with his light and buoyant step, when the cracked voice of Madame Moreau called him back. He turned round and beheld that lady's thin visage scowling at him from the entrance of the dark hole where she spent her life. "Here is the key of your room," she sharply said.

"Is grandmother out?" he falteringly asked, as he took the key.

"Yes, she is, and with Madame Mitron too!" and giving Adrien a look of resentful defiance, the portress vanished in her den. Adrien slowly ascended the staircase. How changed now looked the empty room. No neatly-laid table with the hot smoking soup awaited

him after his hard morning's work. The poor lad looked around him, sat down, and bowing his face between his hands, fairly wept. Of what use did it seem for him to work so hard, to be frugal and thrifty beyond his years, to save and stint in order to live on the six francs a week, to come home with his light cheerful bearing. His grandmother was gone, disgracing herself — disgracing him. When or how would she come back? This last thought was indeed a thought of terror; the young are keenly alive to disgrace. Adrien believed that his grandmother's indiscretions had until now escaped notice; every one in the house knew of them, but with the native delicacy of French politeness, all feigned perfect unconsciousness; even cross old Mère Moreau spared the lad's sensitive pride. "How cleverly I must have managed to smuggle her in," he often thought, with secret exultation; and when he gave a sigh to his old relative's errors, he reflected, like Francis I. after the battle of Pavia, that honour at least was safe. But if an exposure should take place now. Oh! then he must leave the house instantly — nay, the neighbourhood itself, and dim visions of quitting Paris altogether even floated across his brain. Adrien was too sad to prepare onion soup, so he dined on bread and dripping. Madame Moreau noticed his altered bearing and inflamed eyes, though he turned his head away, as he handed her the key on going down; she took, or rather snatched it from him with her usual surliness, but her heart was touched at the lad's evident sorrow.

Amongst the habits of this lady (who had many) was that of emerging from her lodge towards twilight, like a night bird, in order to spend the fine summer

evenings on the step of the street door. From this tribunal of her misanthropy she philosophically surveyed the world, her arms defiantly folded on her breast, her head inclined towards her right shoulder, in mournful contemplation of human follies, — her whole attitude expressive of supreme disdain. A scornful sneer lit up her solemn features on these occasions, and bitterly sarcastic remarks fell from her lips. These remarks were not narrowly confined to peculiar subjects, or directed to certain individuals. Attacks on government, with Madame Moreau's own suggestions, sneers at rival portresses over the way, lamb-like complaints of her own private wrongs, hints to ungrateful lodgers, who might regret her when she was dead and gone, mingled with sudden and fierce apostrophes directed towards unconscious and inoffensive passengers, formed the staple of discourses addressed to the world in general, but of which the lodgers, who constantly came in and out at this hour, derived the full benefit. And much did they dread these evening objurgations in which, with her broken, half-abstracted manner, Madame Moreau contrived to disclose to the public their most private concerns. If Monsieur B. ill-used his wife, the portress railed at the men straightway, and with singular generosity she only became the more explicit in her narrative if there happened to exist any little difference between herself and Madame B.

His knowledge of this touching peculiarity increased Adrien's apprehensions as he came home in the evening. What if the old woman had returned, and Madame Moreau, mindful of the morning, should pity him aloud for having a drunken grandmother! Oh, that there were only a back door! But there was

none; and standing in awful majesty on the threshold of the arch, with a group of lodgers listening to her, he beheld Madame Moreau. He took courage, however, and assuming a disengaged air, addressed the portress with a remark concerning the fineness of the weather. She gave him a sour look that implied, "Do not imagine you can cheat or deceive me;" but she merely said, "Sir, your key is hanging on a nail in the lodge."

Adrien sighed to learn that his grandmother had not yet returned; but with all that, he felt grateful for the old portress's forbearance. It was a sad evening for the lad, as he sat in the dark, stepping out on the landing every five minutes, peeping down the well-like staircase, listening anxiously when a knock was heard below, and feeling his heart leap up to his mouth every time the street door opened and closed again. Deceived by the step of other lodgers, he thought two or three times the truant was returned; a solemn moral reproof rose to his lips; nay, he would feign sleep and perfect indifference. But none of the steps ascended the seventh story, and every time his illusion vanished Adrien's sorrow came back. The house had long been silent, when, towards eleven, he heard a weak and tottering footstep. "It is only the lodger below," thought he, anxious not to deceive himself. But the staircase creaked, the step continued to ascend, it stopped on the landing, and a light gleamed through the chink of his door. Adrien opened it, and saw Madame Mitron; she was alone.

"Where is grandmother?" he hastily exclaimed.

"Don't know," she thickly replied, endeavouring to open her door.

"You shall not go in; where is she?" cried Adrien, placing himself before her.

"I tell you I do not know," testily replied the old woman. "We went to the barrier for a walk, had a salad, a glass of wine, and were coming home, when a crowd divided us at the end of the Pont-Neuf. A child had been run over; people said it was not hurt; but I had got such a turn, that I was obliged to take five or six glasses of brandy at a grocer's before I could get over it."

"So," indignantly said Adrien, "you lured away my weak, innocent grandmother — the poor thing would never go to the barrier — and then abandoned her, when she does not know one street from another, and may get into any mischief. God forgive you!" he mournfully added, as he turned away, with heart too full for more bitter reproach.

"God forgive me! you good-for-nothing little scamp," screamed Madame Mitron with sudden rage, her eyes well nigh starting out of her head, as she shook her candlestick at Adrien. "God forgive me! How dare you hint at such a thing, you mite, you —"

The rest was lost upon Adrien, who hastily descended the staircase, heedless of her drunken railings.

"Monsieur Adrien, if you think I am going to sit up for *you*," wrathfully observed the old portress, as he swiftly passed by her lodge; but the door being half open, he had reached the street before the end of her sentence. He went straight to the Pont-Neuf; the accident had occurred at noon; no one had seen his grandmother; a few shops were still open; he went in, made inquiries, and got laughed at for his pains. After

wandering up and down until one, he went home, convinced that, in the agony of her remorse, his grandmother had made away with herself. "She need not have been afraid, I would have forgiven her," sadly thought Adrien. He had at first doubted whether his knock at the door would procure him admittance, but when, in reply to a shrill inquiry, he had given his name, it quickly opened. On seeing that he was alone, Madame Moreau gave a peculiar look and growl from beneath the shadow of her peaked night-cap, and handing him a light, an act of singular courtesy, said, "take that," almost gently.

Notwithstanding his sorrow, Adrien slept that night — youth will sleep — but with a sad, troubled slumber. Though the sun shone brightly in the little room when he woke up, he felt miserable. The unswept floor, the fragment of his last hurried meal on the table, the dusty mantel-shelf, the pot of *réséda* drooping for want of water, everything, even an old gown of his grandmother's thrown on a chair, made him feel dispirited and low. He rose and dressed hurriedly; for breakfast he cared not; bread and dripping would do very well. Scarcely was he attired when a knock was heard at the door. "Tidings from her," thought Adrien, and he rushed to open. Alas! no; it was only misanthropic Madame Moreau, with an immense soup-plate full of good beef-tea in her hand.

"Come, take it," said she, abruptly; "you want it, wandering all night; those who did the mischief were safe in bed; maybe they have good reasons to stay there," she added, talking and nodding with deep sarcasm at the door of Madame Mitron. "But next

Monday is rent day; we shall see whether those that drink and do not pay are to remain. Will you take this hot plate out of my hand, or am I to stay here all day?" she sharply added, turning round on Adrien. He was profuse in his acknowledgments, but without heeding them, she hobbled down-stairs, muttering her wonder that she had ever come up, and looking very surly, as though to apologize to herself for having committed this little act of kindness. As he drank his soup, Adrien thought how much his grandmother would have relished it, and then he wondered where she was that morning, and whether she had got any breakfast. This latter thought made him feel that he must resume his search without loss of an instant. In a few minutes he was ready, and proceeding hastily down-stairs. He had reached the third-floor when a hand, laid heavily on his shoulder, made him turn round; he looked up, and saw Grand Jean.

"Adrien," said the tall Auvergnat, in a bashful, hesitating sort of manner, "I am not busy this morning; I — I — can go with you, and help to look."

"You are very kind," replied Adrien; and as he shook Jean's hand, he turned his head away; "very, especially after the insulting manner in which I spoke to you yesterday."

"Nonsenre," said Jean, squeezing the lad's hand so hard that other tears besides those of emotion rushed to his eyes; "you never insulted me, child."

"Yes, indeed I did," remorsefully answered Adrien. "It was the tone, you know!"

"Well, never mind; I forgive you."

"Impossible!" resumed Adrien, somewhat nettled;

"you do not know the badness there was in my heart against you. If it had not been for grandmother's sake, I would have knocked you down."

"Would you, indeed," said Jean, with a grave, good-humoured smile, and giving the lad a slap on the shoulder that made him stagger.

"Yes, I would," stoutly said Adrien, as soon as he had recovered his breath; "so pray," he mournfully added, "do not be kind; I cannot bear it."

"I tell you I bear no malice; and you are such an insignificant-looking little fellow, that people will never mind you if you go alone; so let us be off."

Adrien bridled up, and wondered whether he could in honour accept of assistance thus offered. But Jean settled the matter by taking it for granted; and the lad, moreover, secretly felt the force of his reasoning; so, without further resistance on his part, they sallied out. It was a hot, sultry day, and a long and weary walk they had. They visited barriers, and innumerable corps de gardes, or station-houses, but no grandmother could be found. "It is my fault," said Adrien, desperately; "I should have locked her up." Jean with difficulty persuaded him he was not to blame. After a search of several hours, Jean began to lose all hope, but Adrien seemed unwearied. They at length lit on a clue to the object of their search in a remote corps de garde. An old, half-witted peasant-woman, unable to give a proper account of herself, had been apprehended the preceding evening.

"Where is she?" cried Adrien, eagerly looking round. "Oh! she was gone before the magistrate, and was probably tried for vagabondage by this."

"Oh! Jean!" exclaimed Adrien, "let us go before they send her to prison."

He started off, and sped along the street at a rate with which Jean could scarcely keep up, and which made sober passengers stare. At length the police-court was reached; it was crowded; Adrien pushed right and left desperately, but in vain, till Grand Jean, with two or three vigorous elbowings, had cleared the way for his friend. Adrien paused not to utter thanks; he sprang forward to the front of the court; a rapid glance showed him that the bewildered old woman who sat at the bar wringing her hands, and answering, with perplexed look, the questions of the magistrate, was indeed his grandmother. Forgetting everything in his joy, he hastily exclaimed with his own cheerful, confident voice, "Do not be afraid, grandmother; I am here; they wont hurt you."

The old woman uttered a low exclamation, whilst every look went round the court in search of her protector, and lit at length on the diminutive form of Adrien with mingled amusement and surprise.

"Who is that child? What does he want?" asked the magistrate.

"I am not a child, sir," said Adrien, colouring, and raising himself on tiptoe, "I am a working man. I earn six francs a week. I am come for my grandmother, whom Madame Mitron lured away."

"Is this old woman your grandmother?" said the magistrate, smiling.

"Yes, sir," answered Adrian, sighing. "If she only took my advice, and not Madame Mitron's, she would not be here. I am sure," he continued, somewhat huskily,

"I do not ill-use her; I would scorn to ill-use a woman, much less my own grandmother. But then she does not like dripping nor onion soup, and we cannot afford butter or fricot (stew)."

"Do not be hard upon me, Adrien," sobbed the old woman.

"No, grandmother, I will not, and I am sure Monsieur le President looks too kind to be hard upon you either. Monsieur will reflect that you are old, weak-minded, and that Madame Mitron, who is very cunning, takes you out to drink at your expense. You do not drink, grandmother," he added, anxious to save her from the reproach of drunkenness, that most unwomanly vice, so rare in France.

"And, Monsieur le President," here interposed Jean, laying his heavy hand on Adrien's shoulder, "spare the old woman for the sake of the lad, as honest a one as ever breathed. If," he continued, heedless of Adrien's indignant looks, "if he does talk too much like a man, for one with such a beardless chin, why I say it is because he has the heart of a man."

The magistrate smiled. "You are discharged," said he to the old woman. "Believe me, abide by your grandson's advice, and shun Madame Mitron."

He rose, for this was the last case, the assembly dispersed, and in a few minutes the place was empty.

Adrien's grandmother looked very much humbled and cast down as they went home. This distressed him infinitely; he did his best to cheer her, invented numberless excuses for her, and threw all the blame on luckless Madame Mitron.

"But where is Jean?" said he, suddenly breaking off, and looking round as they turned the corner of their own street. Jean had vanished, and though Adrien knew it not, it was some time since they had parted company. Although evening was drawing on, Madame Moreau did not occupy that post on the doorstep from which she surveyed and attacked the world. Adrien peeped into the lodge as he took his key; the lamp was as usual dimly burning, but she who kept alive that sacred flame was invisible.

"Grandmother," said Adrien, as they went up the staircase, "you are hungry of course; but," added he, looking at her wistfully, "I can only give you onion soup."

"Anything, Adrien," sobbed the old woman; "dripping itself is too good for me."

"No, that it is not," said he, resolutely; "and if," he added, raising his voice, "if any one should look sideways at you for what has passed, let that person expect to settle it with me. And if," he continued, louder still, and looking defiantly at Madame Mitron's door, for they had reached their own landing, "if certain nameless individuals, be they men or be they women," he loved the plural number for its dignity, "should attempt to mislead you again; let them understand that they have been mentioned to the magistrate, and that there are such things as commissaries of police." Here Adrien paused, in order to give Madame Mitron time to come forth and answer his challenge, but she remained within, fairly owning herself conquered.

When they entered their own little room, Adrien stopped short, and uttered an exclamation of surprise: the floor was swept, the place had been carefully dusted and set to rights, the *réséda* was itself again, the table was laid out, and the charcoal fire only needed the application of a lighted match.

"This is all Madame Moreau's doing," said Adrien, "and I," he remorsefully added, "I, who said so often she was a sour old thing! Grandmother," he continued in his habitual and cheerful tone, "just light the fire, if you please. I will peel the onions."

In a few minutes the fire was kindled, the dripping was hot in the pan, and the onions on being cast in filled the room with their merry, hissing sound.

"Grandmother," exclaimed Adrien, with glee, "it will be, though made with dripping, the best soup you ever had. Not, mind you," he prudently added, "that butter may not be preferable for some tastes, but if one cannot afford it, what is the use of not making the best of what one has?"

A knock at the door interrupted Adrien's discourse. "Come in," cried he, thinking it was Jean. It was not Jean; it was a waiter from a neighbouring cook-shop, who deposited a tray of covered dishes on the table.

"Monsieur Adrien; paid for," said he, sententiously, and he left the room; whilst Adrien and his grandmother looked at one another in mute surprise.

"Ah!" suddenly cried Adrien, "I see now why Jean left us. Grandmother, look! here is a splendid stew of mutton and haricots; you wished for one. And

see this magnificent piece of veal! Why there is enough for a week! Oh, where is Jean?"

He flew down-stairs, and searched on every one of the seven floors, but neither Jean nor Madame Moreau were to be found; like the genii of an eastern tale, they vanished when their favours were conferred.

"Grandmother," said Adrien, as returning from his fruitless search he sat down with his old relative to their luxurious meal, "I hope you will never go out again with Madame Mitron; but if you had not gone, we should never have —"

"Had this good dinner," put in the old lady, whose gourmandise was not quite subdued.

"No, grandmother," said he, gravely, "we should never have known how much kindness towards us there lay hidden in the hearts of Madame Moreau and Grand Jean."

Three years have passed away: Adrien, cheerful, honest, industrious as ever, inhabits the sunny old garret; but he has taken for his grandmother the room formerly occupied by Madame Mitron, who was disgracefully expelled shortly after the events we have narrated. Since this fortunate occurrence, his old relative has given Adrien no further trouble; and, as his earnings have greatly increased, they live, as he says, "in luxurious style." Grand Jean still dwells in the gloomy old house. He and Adrien are great friends; he occasionally banters the youth, who has not grown much, on his diminutive appearance; but Adrien, mindful of former kindness, and proud of his dawning moustache, takes it all very good-temperedly. Madame

Moreau is as misanthropic as ever; but, as Adrien says, "she is found out, and no one believes her now." This, however, excites great wrath in the old portress, who takes as much pride in her fancied scorn and hatred of mankind, as others are apt to take in their imaginary philanthropy and benevolence.

THE MYSTERIOUS LODGER.

WHO does not like mystery? The heartless, the cold, the unimaginaive assuredly. All poetical natures love it and live in it. Without mystery they exist not. Life is dull, commonplace, and cold, unless they have it. Give it to them, therefore, by all means. Let the Radcliffian cup of romance — but we will not anticipate.

Monsieur Hyacinthe was a widower of middle age and retired habits. He was pale, thin, and bald, but these unromantic peculiarities in his personal appearance did not prevent him from being a passionate lover of romance and mystery. Indeed it is a vulgar and sad mistake to suppose that only youth and beauty love romance and mystery. Youth and beauty have a great many other matters and objects to engross their attention. It often happens, too, that they are cool, calculating, and sometimes actually inclined to worldliness.

Monsieur Hyacinthe was timid and somewhat cautious. The world was so mysterious, the people in it were so full of mysteries, that really one could not be too careful. Thus Monsieur Hyacinthe had got to be on his guard with every one, from his important and stately landlord, Monsieur Moreau, down to his sharp-tempered portress, Madame Latour.

Owing to this peculiarity in his temper, Monsieur Hyacinthe resided alone in a small apartment on the third-floor of a quiet house in a lonely street. He kept no servant; the danger of living alone was not equal to the peril of having a perpetual spy and watch by his side, or, to use Monsieur Hyacinthe's own words, "of cherishing a foe in his bosom." But if Monsieur Hyacinthe had no servant he had a servant's room, which he prudently under-let furnished when he could possibly secure a lodger, which was but seldom, owing, perhaps, to the gins and traps, in the way of preliminary conditions, with which he cautiously intrenched his premises. This room was in its usual state of vacancy, and Monsieur Hyacinthe, after perplexing his mind to discover for what peculiar motive his room did not let when other rooms let all around him, had come to the conclusion that there was a fatality in it.

"There is a fatality in it," he muttered, drawing on his night-cap; and settling himself comfortably by the fireside, he opened his newspaper in order to read the detailed account of the last murder: like many timid individuals, Monsieur Hyacinthe delighted in the sad and the horrible.

Monsieur Hyacinthe had not read a line, when he was disturbed by a ring at the door. He laid down his paper, and with the coolness which a constant habit of such thoughts rendered natural, he said meditatively:

"Thieves! Of course I shall not open. It is too early for burglars."

The ring was impatiently repeated.

"A visitor, perhaps!" pursued Monsieur Hya-

cinthe. "Let him stay out — it is too late to receive visits."

A third time the ring was heard.

Monsieur Hyacinthe's heart turned cold. Such a ring at nine at night must be thieves, visitors, or fire. No sooner did the last fearful suggestion offer itself to his mind than, forgetful of his night-cap or every prudential consideration, Monsieur Hyacinthe precipitately rushed to the door, which he flung open.

A pale, slender, fair-haired young man about twenty, but whose manners were remarkably cool and self possessed, was standing on the landing. He was showily attired, and smelt very strongly of Eau de Cologne; the thumb of his left hand was placed in his corresponding waistcoat pocket; in his other hand he held a small and flexible badine.

"Well, sir," said he, frowning on Monsieur Hyacinthe, as much as his very smooth forehead and eyebrows would allow him to frown, "do you know that I have rung five times at your door?"

"I protest, sir," stammered forth Monsieur Hyacinthe, "I only heard three rings."

"Then, sir," observed the stranger, sternly eyeing him from head to foot, "then, sir, it was extremely, exceedingly impertinent in you not to open sooner. You have a room to let — show it to me."

But Monsieur Hyacinthe, who disliked this authoritative tone, promptly replied that it was too late to see the room. "It is not the legal hour, sir," he said, with some dignity; "the legal hour is from noon till sunset."

The stranger smoothed his chin, smiled, and replied blandly:

"And so, sir, you actually think that a gentleman will grope up three pair of stairs, ring at doors, and walk down again, balked of his will, because you please that it should be so. Sir, why is there a bill up? I insist on seeing the room."

Monsieur Hyacinthe protested, but the stranger was peremptory: and as it was one of his, Monsieur Hyacinthe's, maxims, that a wise man ought to submit to anything in order to avoid a present risk, he yielded at length, though not without calling on every one to witness that he was no longer a free agent. As the stranger was the only person who could hear this protest, it was useless; but Monsieur Hyacinthe's conscience was satisfied — he had done everything which a brave and peaceable man could do, and he proceeded to show the furnished room to the stranger, now fully warned of his illegal conduct. The young man cast a careless look around him, observed that the room suited him, and throwing two gold pieces on the table, bade Monsieur Hyacinthe pay himself for the first month's rent, and keep the change until another month was up.

"Sir," said Monsieur Hyacinthe, "you have not heard my conditions. I am a quiet man, sir; this room is near my rooms; I like to be quiet. I allow no noise, sir, no loud talking, never any music or singing on any account. And I am particular, sir, very particular. I feel convinced this room would never suit you."

"I like it," said the stranger, "and I like you."

Monsieur Hyacinthe nevertheless was going to declare that, though his visitor liked him, the room was not suited to him, and would not do at all, when the

young man, not giving him time to remonstrate, proceeded to inform him that he could apply to Madame Sébillard, number three, the next street, his present landlady and abode, for references; but that, as he hated hypocrisy, he would give him his character himself; and in order to do this with due comfort, he composedly sat down on the bed.

"My name," he began, "is Henri Renaudin. Is it my real name? That is of no consequence. My father is rich: I might live in his hotel if I liked; but there is a stepmother in the way, and I wish to be free. Still you will say — Why come to a poor place like this? I have private reasons for doing so; but to satisfy you, we will say a whim brought me hither, or rather let it be the wish of studying human nature in all its infinite variety;" and as though pleased with this euphonious sentence, M. Renaudin repeated it several times in a complacent tone.

M. Hyacinthe here wanted to slip in a remark; but the other was too quick for him. "I know what you are going to say — Does my father allow me much? No; but I make him pay the same tailor's bills two or three times over: I never pay my tailor myself; it is really too shabby," added M. Renaudin, with profound contempt for the meanness of such an act. "You need not speak," he continued, seeing that M. Hyacinthe was opening his mouth; "I know what you are going to say — How do I get money? The easiest thing in the world: I have already spent three fortunes, of which I never touched a sou. My mother's fortune was the first. Oh, no! now I think of it, it was my cousin's five hundred thousand francs that went first. Ah! they are all gone. Then came my mother's pro-

perty — gone too: and my old uncle's fortune is going now. He is still alive, but he has made a will in my favour, so that I live on my future expectations. You seem astonished; it is very easy: I can put you in the way: borrow money at the rate of two or three hundred per cent., spend it, give parties, and so forth; you will find that a moderate fortune does not last much more than a year. But you look economical: well, then, let us say eighteen months, if you wish to see old Isaac."

"Thank you, sir," precipitately interrupted M. Hyacinthe: "you were speaking about your character?"

"You are welcome to it. In the first place, I am a dreadful gambler and a fearful spendthrift. I delight in throwing money out of the windows, and seeing the people rush and fight for it. Does this window look out on the street? No: ah, sorry for it. Never mind, we shall find an opportunity. I see you are greatly shocked; can't help it, my dear sir — family failing — my mother was a charming woman, but very extravagant, yet greatly admired by the other sex; and, to say the truth, I believe that I have also inherited this peculiarity — that is to say, reversed; but I hate vanity, so we will drop the subject. Well, I think you have my character correctly now. Stop, I was forgetting one very remarkable peculiarity: I am dreadfully violent, a famous duellist, and when excited, would no more mind throwing you out of the window than I would the smoking of a cigar;" and as an apt illustration of this happy comparison, M. Renaudin drew a cigar from his cigar-case, and lighting it from the

candle held by M. Hyacinthe, began smoking it with great composure.

"Sir," ejaculated the alarmed M. Hyacinthe, endeavouring to smile, "this is only some pleasant joke of yours. Remember the window is very high; you would not have the heart to throw a poor man from a third-floor?"

But M. Renaudin said he had the heart to do anything; should feel extremely sorry when it was all over, but could not help it; had therefore thought it best to mention this weakness, as it would be more pleasant to both parties if nothing of the kind occurred. "And now," he added, "that everything is explained, I think that, as I feel rather sleepy, you may leave me."

"I cannot allow that," uneasily exclaimed Monsieur Hyacinthe; "I must give notice to the police."

"I scorn the police," answered Renaudin, with deep contempt.

"Sir," indignantly exclaimed Monsieur Hyacinthe, who was gradually edging towards the door, "you fail in the respect due to the constituted authorities: your language is very illegal."

"I delight in everything illegal," was Renaudin's profane reply.

"Then, sir," resolutely observed Monsieur Hyacinthe, now on the landing, "I shall alarm the house."

"Do," answered Monsieur Renaudin; "there will be noise, fighting, smashing of window-panes, &c., — things in which I rejoice — another trait in my character. But if you have a bone or two broken in the affray, do not say you received no warning."

This was uttered with such suavity of manner, and the speaker had such a fair, meek face, of which the

most prominent features were large eyes of a pale blue, a fat nose, and a retreating chin, that he did not seem the most likely individual to carry his threat into execution; but Monsieur Hyacinthe, who knew what horrible mysteries often lay hid under the fairest aspect, and who never trusted to personal appearances when his safety was at stake, submitted, though not without a protest, and ended by putting the two Napoleons in his pocket, and leaving Monsieur Renaudin master of the field of battle. Fear was not his only reason for acting thus: being a considerate man, he did not like to disturb a quiet house. Besides, he was not sorry to let his room to an individual who could afford to throw money out of the window; for though it is very well to discountenance extravagant people, every one knows that it is profitable to deal with them in the long run. There might be, too, a vague mysterious pleasure for Monsieur Hyacinthe in having this mysterious individual under the same roof with himself; a pleasure the more exquisite, that his tenant's room adjoined that in which he slept, and that when he, Monsieur Hyacinthe, had retired to bed, he could distinctly hear Monsieur Renaudin sneeze three times. Strange thoughts came to Monsieur Hyacinthe, — was this sneezing a signal, who knew, who could tell? Dreams of Renaudin breaking open his door, and approaching his bed-side with a scowl, soothed Monsieur Hyacinthe's slumbers that night.

Early the next morning the mysterious lodger went out. As soon as he was down the staircase, Monsieur Hyacinthe, who had a double key, entered his room, and with a sigh of relief found that Monsieur Renaudin had carried away nothing; which was the less surpri-

sing that, save an old candlestick and a pair of snuffers, there was nothing portable in the room.

This important fact being ascertained, Monsieur Hyacinthe hastened to call on Madame Sébillard.

He found a busy, talkative lady, whose thoughts did not seem to go beyond the concerns of the furnished house of which she called herself mistress. At first she completely misunderstood his purpose, and insisted on letting him her first-floor for the moderate sum of three hundred francs a month. "A bargain, I assure you," she said, "a dead bargain."

"Madame, you do not understand —"

"Oh, yes I do — you want that little back room with the chintz sofa. Well, then, you shall have it. I had promised it to the English lord; but you shall have it."

"Madame, you do not understand me," austere resumed Monsieur Hyacinthe; "I came at this early hour to inquire into the character of a mysterious individual, who left you under strange and sudden circumstances yesterday evening. He called himself to me Renaudin; his real name you perhaps know."

Madame Sébillard's busy face took a touch of melancholy.

"It was a great pity," she said, "but what could I do? I liked him very much, the dearest, gentlest, meekest lamb I ever had, but what could I do? I put it to you, sir; if I did not take Renaudin's room I could not let my second-floor. He bore the dismissal with angelic sweetness, quite entered into my feelings, and went to you, I suppose."

"Madame, there is something in all this," suspiciously said Monsieur Hyacinthe. "You confess you

dismissed this singular being from your house. What had he done? who, what is he?"

"The sweetest-tempered lodger I ever had, and the quietest," replied Madame Sébillard; "I should have been delighted to keep him, if I could have let my second-floor without his room, but I could not. It was sad, very. As to what he does to earn a living, you had better ask him — I always took him to be an employé, or something of the sort."

This shallow attempt to impose on his credulity, Monsieur Hyacinthe was going to receive with an indignant remonstrance, when the appearance of a yellow-haired English family, in search of an apartment, made Madame Sébillard deaf and blind, or rather took and transferred her senses from him to her future lodgers.

Monsieur Hyacinthe withdrew, profoundly disgusted with so much duplicity, and more than ever convinced of the universal tendency which every individual had to cheat and deceive him. As he entered the house in which he resided, meditating how all this would end, Madame Latour, the portress, screamed shrilly from her lodge:

"Monsieur Hyacinthe, will you please to give me ten sous for that letter? — give it to him, Minna, — and another time, Monsieur Hyacinthe, I shall be obliged to you if you will kindly tell me when you take in lodgers at nine at night."

Madame Latour's niece, Minna, a stout, redhaired girl, handed the letter to Monsieur Hyacinthe, who hastily put it back on perceiving that it was directed to Monsieur Renaudin.

"With anything belonging to that man," he said,

solemnly, "I will have nothing to do. There may be gunpowder in that letter, for all I know."

"Gunpowder!" said Madame Latour, coming forward, "smell it, Minna."

Minna did as she was bid, and declared the letter was scented.

"Do not trust it!" ejaculated Monsieur Hyacinthe, "and do not trust the man to whom it is directed."

"I have a great mind to put a match to it," said Madame Latour, who had a Baconian turn for experiments.

"The risk be on your own head," solemnly said Monsieur Hyacinthe, "but mark my words, Madame Latour, distrust that man — and mind your niece," he added, darting a look at Minna, who heard him with open mouth and eyes.

"Mind my niece!" echoed Madame Latour.

"Ay, Madame Latour, mind her!" And Monsieur Hyacinthe went up-stairs, leaving Madame Latour much excited. Minna was her niece, the daughter of her brother in the country, confided to her especial care, and Madame Latour was of opinion that Minna required strict watching and sound exhortation. Of the latter she now received a reasonable dose, with the concluding and irresistible argument of a slap on the face, which Madame Latour held essential to correct female discipline, and which, as a dutiful and affectionate aunt, she would not on any account have omitted.

Not satisfied with warning every one against his lodger, Monsieur Hyacinthe kept strict watch on his motions, so as to leave him the scantiest opportunities of affecting any mischief. But though his vigilance

was most persevering, he could discover nothing reprehensible in the conduct of Monsieur Renaudin, and for his opinion of that singular individual he was obliged to rely a good deal on Monsieur Renaudin himself. This strange being went out early in the morning and came home late at night, just like the most commonplace biped. Occasionally, indeed, he hinted in a dark and gloomy tone at certain deeds in which he had been engaged during the day; but though Monsieur Hyacinthe's hair "stood on end to hear him," as he elegantly expressed it, this was all he could learn, and every one agreed that the information was exceedingly vague.

There was, however, a kind of fearful charm in Renaudin's conversation for the peaceful Hyacinthe; for though, of course, it was very shocking to hear his guest speak with unparalleled and revolting coldness of the innocent hearts he had broken through mere wantonness, and of the foes whom he had laid in mortal combat at his feet — without speaking of all the tailors' bills which he had never paid — every one knows that those are subjects of the most thrilling interest, and which for a long time formed the very staple of modern fiction.

No wonder, therefore, that Monsieur Hyacinthe, being fond of the dark and the dismal, was fascinated by the gloomy discourse of Renaudin. Nor was he the only person on whom this mysterious individual exercised an influence. Every one in the house, from Monsieur Moreau the landlord, who lived on the first-floor, to Madame Latour in her lodge, and the little tailor in his garret, declared there was something incomprehensible about that man.

Monsieur Moreau, who, having once been a deputy, and voted against the freedom of the press, thought himself a marked man, asserted that it would be prudent to turn him out of the house at once, as he was probably the spy of a gang of thieves or conspirators, both of which characters were in his opinion identical; Madame Latour called him a libertine and mauvais sujet, and strictly forbade her niece Minna to cast even a look upon him; the old tailor gave a very diffuse opinion, in which there was something about the degeneracy of human nature, and the cut of Monsieur Renaudin's coat, which was not, it seems, at all orthodox. Monsieur Hyacinthe, who knew most on the subject, said least; "for," as he sententiously observed, "walls had ears." Occasionally, however, he ventured to observe that there was something fatal about his lodger's look — that he was, like Napoleon, a child of destiny, &c. — with which observations every one agreed, as being remarkably applicable to Monsieur Renaudin.

But such, however, was the exemplary conduct of this strange individual, so regularly did he pay his rent, and so nearly did he, upon the whole, behave like other people, that every one began to think him a commonplace fellow, and some persons went so far as to complain that they had been taken in. But events showed that their murmurs had been premature, and Renaudin soon let them see what he could do.

Madame Latour rose one morning, unwarned by presentiments of evil against the approaching calamity. She called Minna, who slept in the same room, and on not hearing Minna answer she thought nothing, save that Minna was oversleeping herself. She took a

jug of cold water, which she held a sovereign remedy against sleepiness, opened the curtains, and prepared to let a few warning drops fall on Minna's fair forehead; but, amazement! the bed was empty and cold, — Minna was flown.

There could be no doubt about it. The young girl's clothes and little valuables were gone, as well as her person. Madame Latour's carefully-guarded and admonished niece had run away. But with whom? Who could have thus fascinated her? Some one in the house, for Minna never went out. Was it Monsieur Moreau? Monsieur Hyacinthe, or the old tailor? Impossible! A flash of light crossed Madame Latour's mind, — it was Renaudin!

True, proof was wanting, but was tame, commonplace proof ever so potent as suspicion? Madame Latour's suspicion proved to be a magnifying-glass of first-rate power, for she alarmed the house, called landlord and lodgers together, and vowed to be revenged on the artful Renaudin, should he presume to show his face again in the house, which every one agreed to be extremely unlikely.

But Renaudin showed them that he was capable of anything, for he came home at his usual hour. Madame Latour began the attack by asking him politely — and her politeness, being very uncommon, always foreboded some deep insult — what he had done with her niece, Minna?

"Ay, sir," she continued, still sweet and smiling, "I should like to know — just out of curiosity — what you have done with her."

Monsieur Renaudin must have been a consummate actor, for his face expressed surprise apparently so un-

feigned, that Monsieur Hyacinthe, who was listening and looking over the banisters, was almost staggered in his belief of Renaudin's guilt.

"What I have done with your niece," at length said the young man, "why, truly, nothing, Madame."

"I suppose, sir," sharply said Madame Latour, "I suppose, sir, you think I am blind, and that I did not notice the looks, sir, — mind, the looks my niece cast upon you?"

Monsieur Renaudin smiled and stroked his chin.

"I confess you have me there," he said, blandly; "why yes, she *did* look at me. She *did*, and I will not deny but she may have felt much, but I gave her no encouragement. On my honour, I did not."

"Sir, what do you mean?" fiercely asked Madame Latour. "Look at you! my niece look at you, a girl reared by me! Say that you stared at her, sir, in a shameful, shameless way, but do not presume to assert that she cast a glance at you."

This sudden and extraordinary contradiction struck Renaudin dumb. He stared at Madame Latour as if he thought that lady mad, and until she asked him what he meant by it, without giving him time to reply, she overwhelmed him with abuse. It was in vain that he opened his lips to answer her invectives by a word of self-defence; for when she at length paused, out of breath, Monsieur Hyacinthe, bending over the banisters, said meekly:

"Well, I do think, sir, that you ought to give up this young girl. I do think you ought."

"I think so too," said Monsieur Moreau, appearing at the head of the staircase, "I am the landlord of this

house, and it is my duty to insist on the deluded Minna being given up to her afflicted aunt."

"And I say it is a shame Monsieur should talk as he has talked of a poor girl, who has given up everything for his sake," said the little tailor, who was sitting in the lodge.

"I protest against the disappearance of this little red-haired girl being laid at my door," indignantly exclaimed Renaudin. "It is a slander on my good taste to hint at it. A slander which I shall resent," he added, looking around him with a fierceness which produced immediate, but brief, silence; for Madame Latour, being now exhausted, became hysterical, and declared that her darling Minna being gone, she had nothing to live for; she partly revived, however, when her friends bade her rouse herself for the sake of her lodgers; and she even exerted herself so much as to promise Monsieur Renaudin, who was now going up to his room, that she would soon be revenged upon him.

"Go up, sir," she said, loftily, "go up. You shall suffer for this yet."

And faithfully, indeed, did she keep her word. During a whole week her foe could neither leave nor enter the house without hearing himself reproached by Madame Latour with the abduction of her niece. But hatred has quick instincts; and the portress soon perceived that the graceless Renaudin was rather flattered at being thus reminded of the impression he had produced on the too-susceptible heart of the fair Minna: she accordingly sought for a surer method of inflicting a wound, and soon found a very effectual one, which she practised thrice with great success. This was to

sleep so soundly at night, that she never heard her enemy's knock at the door, and that, consequently, Monsieur Renaudin had to spend the night in the open air, which, as the portress managed to be particularly drowsy in rainy weather, was not always very pleasant. Of course when he came in in the morning, Monsieur Renaudin raved at Madame Latour in an awful manner, and uttered such fearful threats of vengeance, that the alarmed Monsieur Hyacinthe assured her the whole affair would end in something dreadful. But the portress was a dauntless woman; she continued to brave the anger of her foe in the most fearless manner, and seemingly without suffering in consequence.

Punishment, indeed, seemed in this case to fall on the head of the guilty individual; for such was the persecution Monsieur Renaudin sustained on the subject of Minna, that the unhappy gentleman declared, in a tone of despair, he would leave the house unless it ceased. From morning till night, indeed, he heard of nothing but Minna. The female lodgers looked upon him with evident horror; the men remonstrated with him; and even the timid Monsieur Hyacinthe used the most persuasive arguments in order to induce him to give up Minna.

"Sir!" exclaimed Monsieur Renaudin, rolling his blue eyes in a portentous manner, "if I hear the name of Minna again, I shall do something desperate!"

As it did not escape Monsieur Hyacinthe that his lodger, whilst speaking thus, grasped a small pocket-pistol which was lying on the table, he hastened to retreat; but when he had left the room, he said in a

loud tone, though perhaps not quite loud enough to be heard, "hard-hearted wretch!"

But the circumstance of the pistol, which he had never seen before, nevertheless dwelt in his mind. What did his lodger want it for? A duel or a suicide? Monsieur Hyacinthe inclined rather towards the latter supposition. It seemed exceedingly likely that something fatal had befallen the unhappy Minna, and in such a case it was only natural that the guilty Renaudin's mind should be burdened with remorse; and every one knows that, in such dark and mysterious characters, remorse leads to the most dreadful extremities. The more he thought on the subject, the more Monsieur Hyacinthe became convinced that it was his lodger's intention to commit some rash act; and remembering, with the most disinterested humanity, that he owed him nearly two month's rent, he resolved to save him in spite of himself. He immediately communicated his suspicions to the portress and Monsieur Moreau, who both appeared much startled on hearing of the pistol. The landlord especially seemed thrown into an unusual state of agitation. He treated the idea of a suicide with mysterious contempt, and darkly asked Monsieur Hyacinthe if he had never heard of such things as political assassination, and pistol-shots being fired at marked men? After which he made some unintelligible allusion to a warning letter, but ended by declaring that the pistol should be secured by all means; and that, in order to prevent him from committing mischief, Renaudin should be locked up in his room. But who was to beard the lion in his den? The portress and Monsieur Moreau agreed that Monsieur Hyacinthe was the most fit person to be in-

trusted with such a task. This worthy individual, however, who entertained a most considerate regard for his personal safety, declared it would be as much as his life was worth to undertake such an office, as he knew Renaudin would fight like a tiger; but he hinted something about Monsieur Moreau's great moral courage, and Madame Latour being safe on account of her sex; upon which the landlord eyed him askance, muttering something about hidden accomplices, whilst the portress sharply asked "if Monsieur Hyacinthe wanted to get rid of her that way?" It was at length agreed that the deed should be effected by cunning. At dead of night, therefore, when every one in the house was safely in bed and fast asleep, Madame Latour raised up an alarm of fire in most unearthly accents. The lodgers, being all warned, took no notice of the fact, with the exception of the luckless Renaudin, who flew out of his room, and rushed down-stairs as pale and breathless as though it would not have been as sure a method of committing suicide to remain in bed whilst the house was on fire as any other which he might adopt. Monsieur Hyacinthe, who was lying in ambush on the landing, immediately darted into the room, pounced upon the pistol, which was still lying on the table, caught up a box of razors, and hurried off with his spoil to his own apartment. On discovering that the alarm was a false one, Monsieur Renaudin, who only saw in this another method taken by his enemy the portress to annoy him, gave her a ferocious look, and walked up to his room. His ill-humour was too great to enable him to perceive his loss, and it lucklessly made him neglect to lock his door.

But the next morning Monsieur Renaudin missed

his razors, then his pistol, and ended by discovering that he was locked up. His cries soon brought Monsieur Hyacinthe to his door. The worthy gentleman then explained to his lodger through the key-hole that he was to remain a prisoner until he could prove that he no longer entertained hostile designs against his own person, and might be trusted with a debt. He added, however, that if Monsieur Renaudin would solemnly promise not to throw himself into the Seine, nor to leap down from the towers of Notre Dame, nor to destroy himself in any manner whatsoever; and if he would pay down to him, Monsieur Hyacinthe, the two months' rent which he owed him, and another month's rent to which he was entitled, not having received warning, he would see what he could do in order to free him from his bondage in two or three days' time. These conditions were, however, indignantly rejected by Monsieur Renaudin, who vowed that he would have justice if there was law in the land, and appealed to the police for protection. But Monsieur Hyacinthe reminded him that, as he delighted in everything illegal, and scorned the police, he had no right to complain; and thus ended the conference.

After walking about his room for some time in a state of great indignation, Monsieur Renaudin gradually cooled down, and requested to speak to Monsieur Moreau. When they were both on the landing, he again demanded an explanation of their conduct. Monsieur Hyacinthe replied by saying that a pistol had been found in his room, and by hinting something about the unhappy Minna.

"Minna again!" groaned the captive in a tone of despair; adding, with reckless calmness: "How long do

you mean to keep me a prisoner, and when will you give me anything to eat?"

Monsieur Hyacinthe pretended not to hear this last question; and after a good deal of hesitation, Monsieur Moreau said something about feeding one's enemies, and promised to send up Monsieur Renaudin his breakfast. This meal, however, only consisted of a cup of cold coffee, with a very scanty supply of bread; but such as it was, Monsieur Moreau took the precaution of not delivering it to the captive without previously exacting from him a solemn promise of not attempting to escape for the whole of that day. Monsieur Renaudin, who was hungry, would have promised anything, and readily complied with this condition; the more so, as Monsieur Moreau artfully gave him to understand that he was going to get a *déjeuner à la fourchette*. When he saw the deceit which had been practised upon him, he gave vent to his irritated feelings in bitter and gloomy language "about blighted hopes, and people being driven to desperate deeds." Monsieur Hyacinthe, who was listening on the landing, shuddered as he remembered that the window was not fastened; but Renaudin was probably too much bent on vengeance to think of self-destruction, for he quietly ate his bread, drank his coffee, and when a few hours had passed away, asked if dinner was ever going to come up, or if they meant to starve him. In answer to this question, a dish of onion soup, with cold mutton and bread, soon made their appearance; but on beholding this sorry fare, Monsieur Renaudin became so indignant, that he threatened to break all the window-panes in his room. Monsieur Hyacinthe, alarmed by this menace, pacified him by a dubious promise of mending

his bill of fare the next day. As he was meditating, however, on the best means of eluding this engagement, an event occurred which relieved him from his embarrassment.

News were received of Minna, who had now been gone more than a week. The father of the fugitive wrote to apologize for the conduct of his daughter, who, unable to bear longer absence from home, had returned to the bosom of her family. Madame Latour was greatly incensed by this explanation of the guilty Minna's conduct; and though the innocence of Renaudin was now clearly proved, she threw the whole blame upon him. Every one, indeed, felt disappointed at this commonplace conclusion, and, like the portress, found fault with the luckless Renaudin. They had got into the habit of associating his name with that of Minna — no longer the unhappy; they had looked upon him with suspicion and horror; he had been for them that favourite theatrical character — the traitor of the melo-drama; and lo! he now turned out to be a false traitor! In short, Monsieur Renaudin was now despised for not having committed the act which had drawn down persecution upon him. Monsieur Hyacinthe himself, who, when pleading the cause of Minna, had termed his lodger "a hard-hearted wretch!" no sooner found him to be innocent, than he contemptuously called him "a mean and spiritless fellow!" Monsieur Moreau was the only individual who showed no disappointment or surprise. "He knew all along," he observed, "that Minna had nothing to do with Renaudin's presence in the house." And he dropped such mysterious hints on the subject, that every one shrewdly concluded there must be something in it.

On being informed by Monsieur Hyacinthe of the turn the affair had taken, Monsieur Renaudin naturally enough expected to be released from his captivity; but though his landlord told him that he was free, it struck Monsieur Renaudin that there was something very peculiar in his manner as he did so. Monsieur Hyacinthe's first act, when this explanation was over, was to request his lodger to pay him the two months' rent, which happened to be due that very same day. Monsieur Renaudin threw him the money with silent scorn; but without heeding this, his landlord examined each piece of silver with minute attention, counted and recounted the sum, and at length, apparently satisfied that it was right, put it into his pocket. When this was over, he produced a small packet of papers, which he laid on the table before his lodger. Monsieur Renaudin saw that the papers were the bills of different tradesmen, concerning heavy debts contracted towards them by a Monsieur de St. Maur. After eyeing them one by one with a bewildered look, he asked an explanation of Monsieur Hyacinthe; but his landlord affected not to understand him. "Surely Monsieur needed no explanation; tradespeople had come to inquire whether Monsieur de St. Maur lived in the house; and though Monsieur had changed his name, they gave such an accurate description of his person, that Madame Latour knew it must be he. He had nothing to do with the whole affair; and if the next time Monsieur went out he was apprehended by the gardes du commerce, he could not prevent it."

"Sir," said Monsieur Renaudin, with a sort of desperate calmness, "before we attempt to elucidate this new and mysterious affair, let me know whether

I am to hear anything more about the unhappy Minna."

Monsieur Hyacinthe gravely replied that the Minna affair was over; on hearing which, his lodger thanked Heaven with great fervour — for he had felt it impossible to divest himself of secret misgivings on this point — and proceeded to inform him that he laboured under a mistake in supposing him to be Monsieur de St. Maur. But Monsieur Hyacinthe only smiled incredulously. "It was no business of his, but Monsieur could not expect him to believe this." Such, however, seemed to be Monsieur Renaudin's intention; but his efforts proved fruitless. Monsieur Hyacinthe remained convinced that "Monsieur's real name was not Renaudin, and must consequently be St. Maur. Monsieur had his private reasons for lodging in such a poor place as this; Monsieur thought it shabby to pay his tailor; evidently Monsieur was the individual in question."

"Very well," returned the exasperated Renaudin, "I suppose *I am* Monsieur de St. Maur. But granting this, what business is it of yours?" he fiercely added.

"Don't bully me, sir!" loftily observed Monsieur Hyacinthe, making a dignified retreat towards the door. "I am not one of your unfortunate tradesmen to bear with it. If you wish to leave this house, you can do so at once."

"I protest against this," exclaimed a voice from the landing; "and I hope that if Monsieur has anything like decent feeling left, he will wait for the arrival of the two police officers for whom I am going to send, and who cannot be long without making their ap-

pearance, and allow himself to be quietly taken to prison."

"To prison! — police officers! Well, what have I done now?" asked Renaudin, with a gloomy smile. "Killed or murdered?"

"Monsieur Hyacinthe," continued the voice on the landing, "I call you to witness that he has confessed his horrible intent in the plainest terms! No, sir, you have not done the deed, but your design against my life was not the less criminal. I consider my escape a miraculous one!"

At the conclusion of this speech, Monsieur Moreau, who was the speaker, ventured so far as to look into the room, though he prudently remained behind Monsieur Hyacinthe, whose person acted as an effectual shield for his own.

"Now what does *this* mean?" wildly exclaimed the unhappy Monsieur Renaudin.

"This means," continued Monsieur Moreau, "that Monsieur's real character and designs are now known; that there are such things as traitors among conspirators, and that people may receive letters by which they learn that they are going to be murdered; and though the name of the murdered may be concealed, Monsieur will easily understand that there is no difficulty in guessing at it."

The unhappy Monsieur Renaudin heard the speech in the silence of dismay; but when it was over — "So," he exclaimed, sinking down on a seat in a kind of solemn fury, "so it seems no silly girl can run off, no madman squander his money, and no fool think himself a murdered man, but I must be the seducer,

the spendthrift, and the assassin! Really, gentlemen, I am greatly obliged to you."

"Sir," dryly replied Monsieur Hyacinthe, "I had your character from your own lips; and events have shown that you were, as you boasted, remarkably sincere."

Monsieur Renaudin thrust his left hand into the opening of his waistcoat, and assumed the Napoleon attitude, in order to bid defiance to his enemies with more effect; but a bright thought seemed to flash across his mind, and he suddenly checked himself.

"Leave me," said he, in an authoritative tone; "and let me have pen, ink, and paper: there is that on my mind which must be revealed. Yes," he solemnly added, "all shall be confessed. But remember," he continued, in a menacing tone, "to let no one even approach the door of this room, or linger on the staircase, until half an hour at least has elapsed."

Fear and curiosity induced Monsieur Moreau and Monsieur Hyacinthe to comply with this request; for the former was fully convinced that the alarmed Renaudin was going to sacrifice his friends to his safety, and reckoned on the names of a dozen accomplices at the very least; whilst Monsieur Hyacinthe gloomily congratulated himself on the tale of horror which his lodger was going to unfold. A lingering feeling of suspicion, however, induced them to remain on the first-floor landing until the half hour was over, when they impatiently hurried up-stairs. Renaudin's room door was partly open, and Monsieur Hyacinthe cautiously peeped in. A light was burning on the table, and a letter was lying near it; but Renaudin

had vanished. The truth flashed across his mind; he rushed in, tore the letter open, and read its contents aloud:

"The manifold persecutions which I have endured in this house compel me to retire from the shelter of its inhospitable roof, as I feel convinced that designs against either my life or property are entertained by certain individuals who dwell beneath it. All I say to my persecutors is, that they may live to repent of their conduct."

"Monsieur Hyacinthe," exclaimed Monsieur Moreau, in a prophetic tone, "mark my words — I am a dead man;" and he retired to his apartment with the heroic air of a man resigned to the prospect of being shot at the first opportunity.

But Monsieur Hyacinthe's personal fears were outweighed on this occasion by his curiosity, which was greatly excited by Renaudin's mysterious disappearance. Madame Latour's assertion, that the fugitive had effected his escape by going down a back staircase, and opening the street door whilst she was asleep in her lodge, he always treated with the contempt which such a commonplace explanation deserved. Indeed Monsieur Hyacinthe would have been rather sorry to find out the truth. As his late lodger owed him nothing, and had done him no real injury, he found it, pleasant, upon the whole, to have been connected with such a fearful and desperate character. There was, as he poetically expressed it, "a horrid charm in it, and food for the imagination." Fate, however, seemed perversely bent on dispelling the romance and mystery

with which he had invested Renaudin, and to show this luckless individual in the most commonplace aspect. In the first place, it was ascertained shortly after his disappearance that he was *not* Monsieur de St. Maur; then, as though this was not bad enough, Monsieur Hyacinthe discovered, amongst the few articles which his lodger had left behind him, a small book, from which he learned that Monsieur Renaudin had 1500 francs in the savings' bank — a mean and paltry piece of economy, which made Monsieur Hyacinthe justly indignant, as affording another proof of the gross manner in which he had been taken in. He was still smarting under the mortification of this discovery, when a friend of his treacherous lodger came to claim, in his name, the pistol — which also turned out to be a mere counterfeit, as, whether loaded with powder or lead, it would not go off — the razors, and the book. Monsieur Hyacinthe delivered up the articles with a hope that this was the last time he should hear of their owner. Such, however, was not to be the case, for the very same day Madame Latour triumphantly asked him if he knew who Renaudin was? Monsieur Hyacinthe said "No," with the air of a man resigned to anything he may hear.

"I got it all out of his friend!" exclaimed the portress, with evident exultation. "He is — a hairdresser!"

Monsieur Hyacinthe was at first stunned by this new blow: the splendid, the extravagant, the terrible Renaudin a hairdresser! But no: it could not be: he would not believe it. But, alas! even his scepticism was obliged to yield to the evidence of his senses; for

the hairdresser to whose establishment the redoubtable Renaudin belonged, took a shop in a neighbouring street, so that longer doubt was impossible. There have been, however, such things as romantic hairdressers; but though Monsieur Hyacinthe fancied for a time that Renaudin might belong to that class, this was a short-lived illusion. The young man, according to the universal testimony, led a most exemplary life: instead of going to drink or dance at the barrier, he spent his Sundays with his family, occasionally indulging in the harmless amusement of taking out his sisters for a walk. On learning these circumstances, Monsieur Hyacinthe bitterly declared that "he gave him up." His only comfort under this trying dispensation was, that Renaudin afforded a living proof of the tendency which made every individual seek to cheat and deceive him.

There is no knowing how Monsieur Moreau might have acted under the influence of the dangerous neighbourhood in which he was now placed, if he had not discovered about this time that the anonymous letter which had caused him so much alarm was only a practical joke of one of his friends — a fact which he took in high dudgeon. As for Monsieur Renaudin, he seemed to bear very philosophically the degrading position to which he was reduced in the eyes of his former acquaintances. Perhaps he had learned, from personal experience, that though it is very fine and agreeable to be thought a desperate sort of character, it occasionally happens to be inconvenient, as there are simple people who will take you at your word, whatever ill qualities you may bestow on yourself.

However that may be, it will perhaps be gratifying to the reader to state, that Renaudin continues to be the same exemplary character he always was; he has forsworn all ambitious thoughts, and is satisfied with being considered one of the most prudent, economical, and gentle professors of his gentle craft.

AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY.

THE Rue St. Denis is a busy place in Paris; for it is dirty, thronged, and wealthy. We all know that those tall dingy houses might be gilt if they chose, and that if they remain gloomy and dull, it is because gloom and dulness of aspect are business-like, and have been so from time immemorial. Thus on looking at those houses there arise in the beholder's mind vague visions of vast commerce; of bales of goods piled in lofty rooms; of dusty ledgers and, account books, a goodly library, and, above all, of busy wrinkled men, who have grown bent and grey in the noble art of making money.

The streets leading to the Rue St. Denis share in its privileges; they are dirty, gloomy, and thoroughly business-like. In one of those streets there stands a tall and ancient house, not different in that respect from its neighbours, the lower portion of which is a large mercer's shop. This establishment is held to be one of the very best in the neighbourhood, and has for many years belonged to an individual on whom we will bestow the name of Ramin.

About ten years ago, Monsieur Ramin was a jovial red-faced man of forty, who joked his customers into purchasing his goods, flattered the pretty grisettes outrageously, and now and then gave them a Sunday

treat at the barrier, as the cheapest way of securing their custom. Some people thought him a careless, good-natured fellow, and wondered how, with his off-hand ways, he contrived to make money so fast, but those who knew him well saw that he was one of those who "never lost an opportunity." Others declared that Monsieur Ramin's own definition of his character was, that he was a "bon enfant," and that "it was all luck." He shrugged his shoulders and laughed when people hinted at his deep scheming in making, and his skill in taking advantage of, excellent opportunities.

He was sitting in his gloomy parlour one fine morning in spring, breakfasting from a dark liquid honoured with the name of onion soup, glancing at the newspaper, and keeping a vigilant look on the shop through the open door, when his old servant Catherine suddenly observed:

"I suppose you know Monsieur Bonelle has come to live in the vacant apartment on the fourth floor?"

"What!" exclaimed Monsieur Ramin, in a loud key.

Catherine repeated her statement, to which her master listened in total silence.

"Well!" he said at length, in his most careless tones, "what about the old fellow?" And he once more resumed his triple occupation of reading, eating, and watching.

"Why," continued Catherine, "they say he is nearly dying, and that his housekeeper, Marguerite, vowed he could never get up-stairs alive. It took two men to carry him up; and when he was at length quiet in bed, Marguerite went down to the porter's lodge and sobbed there a whole hour, saying, 'Her poor master had the gout, rheumatism, and a bad

asthma; that though he had been got up-stairs, he would never come down again alive; that if she could only get him to confess his sins and make his will, she would not mind it so much; but that when she spoke of the lawyer or the priest, he blasphemed at her like a heathen, and declared he would live to bury her and every body else.' ”

Monsieur Ramin heard Catherine with great attention, forgot to finish his soup, and remained for five minutes in profound rumination, without so much as perceiving two customers who had entered the shop, and were waiting to be served. When aroused, he was heard to exclaim:

“What an excellent opportunity!”

Monsieur Bonelle had been Ramin's predecessor. The succession of the latter to the shop was a mystery. No one ever knew how it was that this young and poor assistant managed to replace his patron. Some said that he had detected Monsieur Bonelle in frauds which he threatened to expose, unless the business were given up to him as the price of his silence; others averred that, having drawn a prize in the lottery, he had resolved to set up a fierce opposition over the way, and that Monsieur Bonelle, having obtained a hint of his intentions, had thought it most prudent to accept the trifling sum his clerk offered, and avoid a ruinous competition. Some charitable souls — moved no doubt by Monsieur Bonelle's misfortune — endeavoured to console and pump him; but all they could get from him was the bitter exclamation, “To think I should have been duped by *him!*” For Ramin had the art, though then a mere youth, to pass himself off on his master as an innocent provincial lad. Those

who sought an explanation from the new mercer were still more unsuccessful. "My good old master," he said in his jovial way, "felt in need of repose, and so I obligingly relieved him of all business and botheration."

Years passed away; Ramin prospered, and neither thought nor heard of his "good old master." The house, of which he tenanted the lower portion, was offered for sale: he had long coveted it, and had almost concluded an agreement with the actual owner, when Monsieur Bonelle unexpectedly stepped in at the eleventh hour, and by offering a trifle more secured the bargain. The rage and mortification of Monsieur Ramin were extreme. He could not understand how Bonelle, whom he had thought ruined, had scraped up so large a sum; his lease was out, and he now felt himself at the mercy of the man he had so much injured. But either Monsieur Bonelle was free from vindictive feelings, or those feelings did not blind him to the expediency of keeping a good tenant; for though he raised the rent, until Monsieur Ramin groaned inwardly, he did not refuse to renew the lease. They had met at that period; but never since.

"Well, Catherine," observed Monsieur Ramin to his old servant, on the following morning, "how is that good Monsieur Bonelle getting on?"

"I dare say you feel very uneasy about him," she replied, with a sneer.

Monsieur Ramin looked up and frowned.

"Catherine," said he, dryly, "you will have the goodness, in the first place, not to make impertinent remarks; in the second place, you will oblige me by

going up-stairs to inquire after the health of Monsieur Bonelle, and say that I sent you."

Catherine grumbled, and obeyed. Her master was in the shop, when she returned in a few minutes, and delivered with evident satisfaction the following gracious message:

"Monsieur Bonelle desires his compliments to you, and declines to state how he is; he will also thank you to attend to your own shop, and not to trouble yourself about his health."

"How does he look?" asked Monsieur Ramin, with perfect composure.

"I caught a glimpse of him, and he appears to me to be rapidly preparing for the good offices of the undertaker."

Monsieur Ramin smiled, rubbed his hands, and joked merrily with a dark-eyed grisette, who was cheapening some ribbon for her cap. That girl made an excellent bargain that day.

Towards dusk the mercer left the shop to the care of his attendant, and softly stole up to the fourth story. In answer to his gentle ring, a little old woman opened the door, and, giving him a rapid look, said briefly:

"Monsieur is inexorable; he won't see any doctor whatever."

She was going to shut the door in his face, when Ramin quickly interposed, under his breath, with "I am not a doctor."

She looked at him from head to foot.

"Are you a lawyer?"

"Nothing of the sort, my good lady."

"Well, then, are you a priest?"

"I may almost say, quite the reverse."

"Indeed you must go away, master sees no one."

Once more she would have shut the door; but Ramin prevented her.

"My good lady," said he, in his most insinuating tones, "it is true I am neither a lawyer, a doctor, nor a priest. I am an old friend, a very old friend of your excellent master; I have come to see good Monsieur Bonelle in his present affliction."

Marguerite did not answer, but allowed him to enter, and closed the door behind him. He was going to pass from the narrow and gloomy ante-chamber into an inner room — whence now proceeded a sound of loud coughing — when the old woman laid her hand on his arm, and raising herself on tiptoe to reach his ear, whispered:

"For Heaven's sake, sir, since you are his friend, do talk to him; do tell him to make his will, and hint something about a soul to be saved, and all that sort of thing: do, sir!"

Monsieur Ramin nodded and winked in a way that said "I will." He proved, however, his prudence by not speaking aloud; for a voice from within sharply exclaimed:

"Marguerite, you are talking to some one. Marguerite, I will see neither doctor nor lawyer; and if any meddling priest dare —"

"It is only an old friend; sir," interrupted Marguerite, opening the inner door.

Her master, on looking up, perceived the red face of Monsieur Ramin peeping over the old woman's shoulder, and irefully cried out:

"How dare you bring that fellow here? And you, sir, how dare you come?"

"My good old friend, there are feelings," said Ramin, laying his hand on his heart, — "there are feelings," he repeated, "that cannot be subdued. One such feeling brought me here. The fact is, I am a good-natured, easy fellow, and I never bear malice. I never forget an old friend, but love to forget old differences when I find one party in affliction."

He drew a chair forward as he spoke, and composedly seated himself opposite to his late master.

Monsieur Bonelle was a thin old man, with a pale sharp face and keen features. At first he eyed his visitor from the depths of his vast arm-chair; but, as if not satisfied with this distant view, he bent forward, and laying both hands on his thin knees, he looked up into Ramin's face with a fixed and piercing gaze. He had not, however, the power of disconcerting his guest.

"What did you come here for?" he at length asked.

"Merely to have the extreme satisfaction of seeing how you are, my good old friend. Nothing more."

"Well, look at me — and then go."

Nothing could be so discouraging: but this was an excellent opportunity, and when Monsieur Ramin *had* an excellent opportunity in view, his pertinacity was invincible. Being now resolved to stay, it was not in Monsieur Bonelle's power to banish him. At the same time, he had tact enough to render his presence agreeable. He knew that his coarse and boisterous wit had often delighted Monsieur Bonelle of old, and he now

exerted himself so successfully as to betray the old man two or three times into hearty laughter.

"Ramin," said he, at length, laying his thin hand on the arm of his guest, and peering with his keen glance into the mercer's purple face, "you are a funny fellow, but I know you; you cannot make me believe you have called just to see how I am, and to entertain me. Come, be candid for once; what do you want?"

Ramin threw himself back in his chair, and laughed blandly, as much as to say, "*Can* you suspect me?"

"I have no shop now out of which you can wheedle me," continued the old man; "and surely you are not such a fool as to come to me for money."

"Money?" repeated the draper, as if his host had mentioned something he never dreamt of. "Oh, no!"

Ramin saw it would not do to broach the subject he had really come about too abruptly now that suspicion seemed so wide awake — *the* opportunity had not arrived.

"There is something up, Ramin, I know; I see it in the twinkle of your eye: but you can't deceive me again."

"Deceive *you*?" said the jolly schemer, shaking his head reverentially. "Deceive a man of your penetration and depth? Impossible! The bare supposition is flattery. My dear friend," he continued, soothingly, "I did not dream of such a thing. The fact is, Bonelle, though they call me a jovial, careless, rattling dog, I have a conscience; and, somehow, I have never felt quite easy about the way in which I became your

successor down-stairs. It *was* rather sharp practice, I admit."

Bonelle seemed to relent.

"Now for it," said the opportunity-hunter to himself. — "By-the-by" (speaking aloud), "this house must be a great trouble to you in your present weak state? Two of your lodgers have lately gone away without paying — a great nuisance, especially to an invalid."

"I tell you I'm as sound as a colt."

"At all events, the whole concern must be a great bother to you. If I were you, I would sell the house."

"And if I were *you*," returned the landlord, dryly, "I would buy it —"

"Precisely," interrupted the tenant, eagerly.

"That is, if you could get it. Phoo! I knew you were after something. Will you give eighty thousand francs for it?" abruptly asked Monsieur Bonelle.

"Eighty thousand francs!" echoed Ramin. "Do you take me for Louis Philippe or the Bank of France?"

"Then we'll say no more about it — are you not afraid of leaving your shop so long?"

Ramin returned to the charge, heedless of the hint to depart. "The fact is, my good old friend, ready money is not my strong point just now. But if you wish very much to be relieved of the concern, what say you to a life annuity? I could manage that."

Monsieur Bonelle gave a short, dry, church-yard cough, and looked as if his life were not worth an

hour's purchase. "You think yourself immensely clever, I dare say," he said. "They have persuaded you that I am dying. Stuff! I shall bury you yet."

The mercer glanced at the tin, fragile frame, and exclaimed to himself, "Deluded old gentleman!" "My dear Bonelle," he continued, aloud, "I know well the strength of your admirable constitution; but allow me to observe that you neglect yourself too much. Now, suppose a good sensible doctor —"

"Will you pay him?" interrogated Bonelle sharply.

"Most willingly," replied Ramin, with an eagerness that made the old man smile. "As to the annuity, since the subject annoys you, we will talk of it some other time."

"After you have heard the doctor's report," sneered Bonelle.

The mercer gave him a stealthy glance, which the old man's keen look immediately detected. Neither could repress a smile: these good souls understood one another perfectly, and Ramin saw that this was not the excellent opportunity he desired, and departed.

The next day Ramin sent a neighbouring medical man, and heard it was his opinion that if Bonelle held on for three months longer, it would be a miracle. Delightful news!

Several days elapsed, and although very anxious, Ramin assumed a careless air, and did not call upon his landlord, or take any notice of him. At the end of the week old Marguerite entered the shop to make a trifling purchase.

"And how are we getting on up-stairs?" negligently asked Monsieur Ramin.

"Worse and worse, my good sir," she sighed. "We have rheumatic pains, which make us often use expressions the reverse of Christian-like, and yet nothing can induce us to see either the lawyer or the priest; the gout is getting nearer to our stomach every day, and still we go on talking about the strength of our constitution. Oh, sir, if you have influence with us, do, pray do, tell us how wicked it is to die without making one's will or confessing one's sins."

"I shall go up this very evening," ambiguously replied Monsieur Ramin.

He kept his promise, and found Monsieur Bonelle in bed, groaning with pain, and in the worst of tempers.

"What poisoning doctor did you send?" he asked, with an ireful glance; "I want no doctor, I am not ill; I will not follow his prescription; he forbade me to eat; I *will* eat."

"He is a very clever man," said the visitor. "He told me that never in the whole course of his experience has he met with what he called so much 'resisting power' as exists in your frame. He asked me if you were not of a long-lived race."

"That is as people may judge," replied Monsieur Bonelle. "All I can say is, that my grandfather died at ninety, and my father at eighty-six."

"The doctor owned that you had a wonderfully strong constitution."

"Who said I hadn't?" exclaimed the invalid, feebly.

"You may rely on it, you would preserve your health better if you had not the trouble of these vexatious lodgers. Have you thought about the life an-

nuity?" said Ramin, as carelessly as he could considering how near the matter was to his hopes and wishes.

"Why, I have scruples," returned Bonelle, coughing. "I do not wish to take you in. My longevity would be the ruin of you."

"To meet that difficulty," quickly replied the mercer, "we can reduce the interest."

"But I must have high interest," placidly returned Monsieur Bonelle.

Ramin, on hearing this, burst into a loud fit of laughter, called Monsieur Bonelle a sly old fox, gave him a poke in the ribs, which made the old man cough for five minutes, and then proposed that they should talk it over some other day. The mercer left Monsieur Bonelle in the act of protesting that he felt as strong as a man of forty.

Monsieur Ramin felt in no hurry to conclude the proposed agreement. "The later one begins to pay, the better," he said, as he descended the stairs.

Days passed on, and the negotiation made no way. It struck the observant tradesman that all was not right. Old Marguerite several times refused to admit him, declaring her master was asleep: there was something mysterious and forbidding in her manner that seemed to Monsieur Ramin very ominous. At length a sudden thought occurred to him: the housekeeper — wishing to become her master's heir — had heard his scheme and opposed it. On the very day that he arrived at this conclusion, he met a lawyer, with whom he had formerly had some transactions, coming down the staircase. The sight sent a chill through the mercer's commercial heart, and a presentiment — one

of those presentiments that seldom deceive — told him it was too late. He had, however, the fortitude to abstain from visiting Monsieur Bonelle until evening came; when he went up, resolved to see him in spite of all Marguerite might urge. The door was half open, and the old housekeeper stood talking on the landing to a middle-aged man in a dark cassock.

"It is all over! The old witch has got the priests at him," thought Ramin, inwardly groaning at his own folly in allowing himself to be forestalled.

"You cannot see Monsieur to-night," sharply said Marguerite, as he attempted to pass her.

"Alas! is my excellent friend so very ill?" asked Ramin, in a mournful tone.

"Sir," eagerly said the clergyman, catching him by the button of his coat, "if you are indeed the friend of that unhappy man, do seek to bring him into a more suitable frame of mind. I have seen many dying men, but never so much obstinacy, never such infatuated belief in the duration of life."

"Then you think he really *is* dying?" asked Ramin; and, in spite of the melancholy accent he endeavoured to assume, there was something so peculiar in his tone, that the priest looked at him very fixedly as he slowly replied:

"Yes, sir, I think he is."

"Ah!" was all Monsieur Ramin said; and as the clergyman had now relaxed his hold of the button, Ramin passed in spite of the remonstrances of Marguerite, who rushed after the priest. He found Monsieur Bonelle still in bed, and in a towering rage.

"Oh! Ramin, my friend," he groaned, "never take a housekeeper, and never let her know you have any

property. They are harpies, Ramin, — harpies! such a day as I have had; first, the lawyer, who comes to write down 'my last testamentary dispositions,' as he calls them; then the priest, who gently hints that I am a dying man. Oh, what a day!"

"And *did* you make your will, my excellent friend?" softly asked Monsieur Ramin, with a keen look.

"Make my will?" indignantly exclaimed the old man; "make my will? what do you mean, sir? do you mean to say I am dying?"

"Heaven forbid!" piously ejaculated Ramin.

"Then why do you ask me if I have been making my will?" angrily resumed the old man. He then began to be extremely abusive.

When money was in the way, Monsieur Ramin, though otherwise of a violent temper, had the meekness of a lamb. He bore the treatment of his host with the meekest patience, and having first locked the door so as to make sure that Marguerite would not interrupt them, he watched Monsieur Bonelly attentively, and satisfied himself that the excellent opportunity he had been ardently longing for had arrived. "He is going fast," he thought; "and unless I settle the agreement to-night, and get it drawn up and signed to-morrow, it will be too late."

"My dear friend," he at length said aloud, on perceiving that the old gentleman had fairly exhausted himself, and was lying panting on his back, "you are indeed a lamentable instance of the lengths to which the greedy lust of lucre will carry our poor human nature. It is really distressing to see Marguerite, a faithful, attached servant, suddenly converted into a

tormenting harpy by the prospect of a legacy! Lawyers and priests flock around you like birds of prey, drawn hither by the scent of gold! Oh, the miseries of having delicate health combined with a sound constitution and large property!"

"Ramin," groaned the old man, looking inquiringly into his visitor's face, "you are again going to talk to me about that annuity — I know you are!"

"My excellent friend, it is merely to deliver you from a painful position."

"I am sure, Ramin, you think in your soul I am dying," whimpered Monsieur Bonelle.

"Absurd, my dear sir. Dying? I will prove to you that you have never been in better health. In the first place, you feel no pain."

"Excepting from rheumatism," groaned Monsieur Bonelle.

"Rheumatism! who ever died of rheumatism? and if that be all —"

"No, it is not all," interrupted the old man with great irritability; "what would you say to the gout getting higher and higher up every day?"

"The gout is rather disagreeable, but if there is nothing else —"

"Yes, there is something else," sharply said Monsieur Bonelle. "There is an asthma that will scarcely let me breathe, and a racking pain in my head that does not allow me a moment's ease. But if you think I am dying, Ramin, you are quite mistaken."

"No doubt, my dear friend, no doubt; but in the mean while, suppose we talk of this annuity. Shall we say one thousand francs a year?"

"What?" asked Bonelle, looking at him very fixedly.

"My dear friend, I mistook: I meant two thousand francs per annum," hurriedly rejoined Ramin.

Monsieur Bonelle closed his eyes, and appeared to fall into a gentle slumber. The mercer coughed; the sick man never moved.

"Monsieur Bonelle."

No reply.

"My excellent friend."

Utter silence.

"Are you asleep?"

A long pause.

"Well, then, what do you say to three thousand?"

Monsieur Bonelle opened his eyes.

"Ramin," said he, sententiously, "you are a fool; the house brings me in four thousand as it is."

This was quite false, and the mercer knew it; but he had his own reasons for wishing to seem to believe it true.

"Good Heavens!" said he, with an air of great innocence, "who could have thought it, and the lodgers constantly running away. Four thousand? Well, then, you shall have four thousand."

Monsieur Bonelle shut his eyes once more, and murmured "The mere rental — nonsense!" He then folded his hands on his breast, and appeared to compose himself to sleep.

"Oh, what a sharp man of business he is!" Ramin said, admiringly: but for once omnipotent flattery failed in its effect: "So acute!" continued he, with a stealthy glance at the old man, who remained perfectly unmoved. "I see you will insist upon making it the other five hundred francs."

Monsieur Ramin said this as if five thousand five hundred francs had already been mentioned, and was the very summit of Monsieur Bonelle's ambition. But the ruse failed in its effect; the sick man never so much as stirred.

"But, my dear friend," urged Monsieur Ramin, in a tone of feeling remonstrance, "there is such a thing as being too sharp, too acute. How can you expect that I shall give you more when your constitution is so good, and you are to be such a long liver?"

"Yes, but I may be carried off one of those days," quietly observed the old man, evidently wishing to turn the chance of his own death to account.

"Indeed, and I hope so," muttered the mercer, who was getting very ill-tempered.

"You see," soothingly continued Bonelle, "you are so good a man of business, Ramin, that you will double the actual value of the house in no time. I am a quiet, easy person, indifferent to money; otherwise this house would now bring me in eight thousand at the very least."

"Eight thousand!" indignantly exclaimed the mercer. "Monsieur Bonelle, you have no conscience. Come now, my dear friend, do be reasonable. Six thousand francs a year (I don't mind saying six) is really a very handsome income for a man of your quiet habits. Come, be reasonable." But Monsieur Bonelle turned a deaf ear to reason, and closed his eyes once more. What between opening and shutting them for the next quarter of an hour, he at length induced Monsieur Ramin to offer him seven thousand francs.

"Very well, Ramin, agreed," he quietly said; "you

have made an unconscionable bargain." To this succeeded a violent fit of coughing.

As Ramin unlocked the door to leave, he found old Marguerite, who had been listening all the time, ready to assail him with a torrent of whispered abuse for duping her "poor dear innocent old master into such a bargain." The mercer bore it all very patiently; he could make allowances for her excited feelings, and only rubbed his hands and bade her a jovial good evening.

The agreement was signed on the following day, to the indignation of old Marguerite, and the mutual satisfaction of the parties concerned.

Every one admired the luck and shrewdness of Ramin, for the old man every day was reported worse; and it was clear to all that the first quarter of the annuity would never be paid. Marguerite, in her wrath, told the story as a grievance to every one: people listened, shook their heads, and pronounced Monsieur Ramin to be a very clever fellow.

A month elapsed. As Ramin was coming down one morning from the attics, where he had been giving notice to a poor widow who had failed in paying her rent, he heard a light step on the stairs. Presently a sprightly gentleman, in buoyant health and spirits, wearing the form of Monsieur Bonelle, appeared. Ramin stood aghast.

"Well, Ramin," gaily said the old man, "how are you getting on? Have you been tormenting the poor widow up-stairs? Why, man, we must live and let live!"

"Monsieur Bonelle," said the mercer, in a hollow tone, "may I ask where is your rheumatism?"

"Gone, my dear friend, — gone."

"And the gout that was creeping higher and higher every day," exclaimed Monsieur Ramin, in a voice of anguish.

"It went lower and lower, till it disappeared altogether," composedly replied Bonelle.

"And your asthma —"

"The asthma remains, but asthmatic people are proverbially long-lived. It is, I have been told, the only complaint that Methuselah was troubled with." With this Bonelle opened his door, shut it, and disappeared.

Ramin was transfixed on the stairs; petrified with intense disappointment, and a powerful sense of having been duped. When he was discovered, he stared vacantly, and raved about an excellent opportunity of taking his revenge.

The wonderful cure was the talk of the neighbourhood, whenever Monsieur Bonelle appeared in the streets, jauntily flourishing his cane. In the first frenzy of his despair, Ramin refused to pay; he accused every one of having been in a plot to deceive him; he turned off Catherine and expelled his porter; he publicly accused the lawyer and priest of conspiracy; brought an action against the doctor, and lost it. He had another brought against him for violently assaulting Marguerite, in which he was cast in heavy damages. Monsieur Bonelle did not trouble himself with useless remonstrances, but, when his annuity was refused, employed such good legal arguments, as the exasperated mercer could not possibly resist.

Ten years have elapsed, and MM. Ramin and Bonelle still live on. For a house which would have

been dear at fifty thousand francs, the draper has already handed over seventy thousand.

The once red-faced, jovial Ramin is now a pale, haggard man, of sour temper and aspect. To add to his anguish, he sees the old man thrive on that money which it breaks his heart to give. Old Marguerite takes a malicious pleasure in giving him an exact account of their good cheer, and in asking him if he does not think Monsieur looks better and better every day. Of one part of this torment Ramin might get rid, by giving his old master notice to quit, and no longer having him in his house. But this he cannot do; he has a sacred fear that Bonelle would take some excellent opportunity of dying without his knowledge, and giving some other person an excellent opportunity of personating him, and receiving the money in his stead.

The last accounts of the victim of excellent opportunities represent him as being gradually worn down with disappointment. There seems every probability of his being the first to leave the world; for Bonelle is heartier than ever.

THE
EXPERIENCES OF SYLVIE DELMARE.

CHAPTER I.

It was the eve of New Year's Day. I sat alone in the dining-room, now cold and dark; the drawing-room door was slightly ajar; I could see my step-mother sitting by the fire-side; she looked smiling and pleased; her two daughters stood talking and laughing together on the hearth-rug; the lamp was still unlit, but the fire burned with a bright cheerful glow: I turned away my glance with a saddened heart.

This was the last day of the year, the day of Saint Sylvester, my patron saint, — yet who had offered me the bouquet of choice flowers? who had embraced me tenderly, and wished that this my fête day might be gay and happy? — No one.

It had not always been so. I remembered the wonderful nosegay my poor father never failed to provide on this day for his little Sylvie; the mystery with which he placed it in her room, so that it might be the first object to greet her sight when she woke; his apparent surprise as to how it had come there; and then the sudden smile, the embrace and fond kiss, all came back; but this was over now; he had been dead

a year and more. I was a portionless orphan of sixteen, and the only legacy my father — a retired officer whose pension died with him — had been able to bequeath to a step-mother, good indeed, but cold.

They had loved in youth, but been compelled to part. She was united to a rich old man; my father loved again and married — my mother, who died young: I was their only child. He had been a widower for several years, when he met once more his early love; she also was free, with two daughters and a handsome fortune: they married. They were happy, but the fervour of their youthful attachment was over; my step-mother could scarcely forgive her husband the love he had felt for his first wife; I saw that she was jealous of the past, and that it pained her to look on me, because I was said to be my mother's living image. Yet when my father was on his death-bed she promised him, of her own accord, to bring me up with her daughters, and treat me as her child. She was an honourable woman, and rigidly fulfilled this engagement. I shared the studies of Joséphine and Louise, I was dressed like them, I went out with them, and partook of all their pleasures; but my step-mother was a woman; I was the daughter of her rival, and she could not love me.

My feelings for her were contradictory. I sometimes loved and sometimes disliked her. I resented her indifference or blessed her goodness by turns. I would have given anything to be loved by her; I had even made a few timid attempts; but disheartened at their failure, I at length kept aloof, and widened that line of separation which she had imperceptibly established betwixt us. Yet the knowledge of her

coldness always grieved me, and it was this that saddened me as I sat in the dining-room, unmissed and undisturbed, on the eve of New Year's Day.

Ere long I heard the great drawing-room door open; then a servant came in and laid down something on the floor. Louise and Joséphine uttered exclamations of delight.

"Beautiful! lovely!" they both cried. I heard the rustling of silk. I knew the New Year's presents were come, that mine was amongst the rest, but I would not look, nor even confess to myself that I cared to look.

"I am glad you like them, my darlings," said the gentle voice of my step-mother; "where is Sylvie?"

"Moping, of course," replied the charitable Louise.

"Of course!" echoed her no less charitable sister.

I was called, and came forth resolved not to be pleased; but my heart relented at once when I saw the three dresses of blue silk lying on the sofa. I took up mine, looked at it, and turned towards my step-mother with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes. I felt glad and grateful; I longed to go up to her, to say something, to embrace her, but there was little encouragement in her cold tone as she said, "Sylvie, here is your New Year's Day present," none in her calm face; besides, she was absorbed in looking at her daughters, who were already trying on their dresses. I sighed and followed their example. When Louise and Joséphine had been sufficiently admired by their mother, and had placed themselves at every possible distance for her to see how they looked, she turned towards the corner where I stood apart and unheeded. She looked at me, then at her daughters, then at me again, and a change came over her placid countenance.

I felt distressed, for I knew what was passing in her mind. The daughters of my step-mother were wholly unlike her; she was pretty still, fair and delicate; they were dark, coarse-skinned girls, with hair as crisp as that of mulattoes. I certainly was not handsome, but nature had given me a profusion of golden-coloured hair, blue eyes, and the clear complexion of youth. I know not under what maternal delusion my step-mother laboured when she chose a light blue as the colour for the three dresses; certain it is the effect for her daughters was deplorable. They, poor girls, saw nothing of this, but she did, and as the colour happened to become me very well, she suffered doubly.

I felt truly grieved. I would have given up all the dresses in the world for one kind glance, for one word of affection. I looked at my step-mother wistfully; I wished her to understand what I felt; but my appealing look met with no reply; her countenance was overcast, and her eye averted from me. My pleasure vanished, the present gave me no joy; for though I had not worn it more than a few minutes, it had already been the cause of pain to the giver. I left the apartment in silence, and went up to my own room more sad than ever. What a difference between this and my father's presents! He had once given me a little printed muslin dress not worth more than a few francs, but I remembered the delight with which I tried it on, and got up on a chair to see myself in my very diminutive mirror, and thought how gracefully the skirt fell in long and ample folds, and how charming and becoming a dress it was altogether. But the costly silk yielded me no such gratification; I sat down, heedless of creasing it, and without so much as

giving one glance at the looking-glass. My heart was very full; I thought of old times; of my dead father; of my step-mother, whom I could have loved so dearly if she would only have allowed me; of my loneliness in this world, where no one cared for me. "Oh! that some one would only let me love a great deal, and love me a little in return," I exclaimed inwardly.

My look here fell on an object which had escaped it until then: it was only a nosegay of white flowers, standing in a vase on my dressing-table, but it made my heart beat as I drew near it, and when I bent to inhale the fragrance of the pale blossoms, the tears I had striven to repress till then, fell fast. I knew it was the old servant Catherine who had placed those flowers there. She, who had known me from a child, loved me; she had not forgotten that this was the fête day of her little Sylvie. I felt comforted, and almost cheerful. There is something in true kindness that opens the heart. What could old Catherine do for me? Nothing; her good-will was about as useful to me as the flowers she had placed in my room in my absence, yet both gladdened me, gave me new feelings and new hopes. I paced my room with a quick step, forming schemes for the future, and building castles in the air. "I will not stay here to have my heart daily wounded." I thought with rising pride; "I will not stay to be a burden to those by whom I am not loved: I will write to my god-mother."

I looked at my god-mother's portrait as it hung on the wall before me, in order to confirm myself in this resolve. The face was young, and, if not good-looking, at least good-natured. But it had been drawn many years back, and I knew that the respected ori-

ginal had now attained a good old age. She lived in a quiet little town twenty leagues off; I had no remembrance of her, and, to my knowledge, she had never sought to see me. I dutifully wrote to her on the first day of the year, and on the eve of her fête day. She gave me short answers and her blessing: to this was our intercourse limited.

But I was young and romantic, and I had always settled it in my mind that my god-mother, a rich old maid, with no near relatives, was to be the good fairy of my destiny. Now was the moment to test her. My New Year's Day letter was not yet written; I framed it according to my present mood.

At the end of a week I received the desired reply. My step-mother seemed a little surprised at my god-mother's invitation for an indefinite period, but observing "that Mademoiselle Tournelle probably meant to adopt me," she quietly gave her assent. When the day fixed for my departure arrived, I perceived that I felt more sad than joyful at the success of my scheme. It seemed unfriendly to leave the familiar place, the step-mother, who, with all her coldness, had been so very good; the two girls, who, though often unkind, had called me sister. My heart yearned towards them in spite of repelled affection and wounded pride; but they had no such feelings. Louise and Joséphine saw me depart with evident pleasure; their mother gave me a cold embrace, that checked the thanks for past kindness ready to fall from my lips, and when I entered the little car that was to convey me to the diligence in the neighbouring town, no one, save old Catherine, stood on the doorway to see me depart, and wish me a happy journey.

CHAPTER II.

LONG before I had reached my destination, I had comfortably settled it in my own mind that my god-mother was an angelic old lady, who would soon doat upon me, for whom I should entertain great affection and respect, and who would find in me the staff and comfort of her old age. That she was a most noble-hearted, amiable person I could not doubt, for she had been betrothed in youth to a gentleman who died young, and for whose sake she was still a spinster, at the age of seventy.

It was late when I arrived. The house of my god-mother stood on the outskirts of the town; it was a quiet-looking place, with a narrow strip of garden. The diligence stopped; I alighted; my trunk was lowered down on the pavement; the guard blew his horn; the postillion cracked his whip, and the lumbering vehicle clattered down the narrow street. I gave the bell a timid, hesitating jerk; a heavy step was heard in the passage, then the door opened, and an enormously stout old servant, holding a light in her hand, appeared on the threshold.

"Mademoiselle Tournelle," I said in a low tone.

The servant eyed me from head to foot, held up the light to see my trunk, then slowly looked at me again. The night was cold, the wind blew keenly, I became impatient.

"Mademoiselle Tournelle," I said again.

"Do you think I am deaf?" was the gracious answer of the fat servant. She condescended, however, to let me enter, and even bent her majestic person for the purpose of lifting up my trunk. After the most desperate efforts, she succeeded in dragging it in, puffing very hard and eyeing me askance all the time. Out of breath with this painful exertion, she silently pointed to a door on her right: I entered. The room was low, small, and oppressively warm. A large wood fire burned on the hearth; I felt a thick carpet under my feet; a lamp, suspended from the ceiling, gave a narrow circle of faint, dim light, and left the rest of the room in comparative obscurity. A wide couch, old high-backed chairs, a mahogany press that reflected the fire-light in its broad polished pannels, met my rapid glance. I looked for my god-mother, but all I could see was a dark massive-looking arm-chair by the fireside, and an old cat asleep on the hearth-rug. I was wondering whether my god-mother would soon make her appearance, when I heard a husky cough, which seemed to proceed from the depths of the arm-chair, and something strongly resembling — in the dark — a large black bundle began to agitate itself in the same quarter. I came quickly forward. I felt I stood in the presence of my god-mother — I was a foolish little thing in those days; I know not why a mist came over my eyes, and I know not how, instead of merely taking my god-mother's extended hand, I found myself on my knees before her, crying over the hand I had seized as if my heart would break, and sobbing "Marraine, Marraine!"

"Oh! mon Dieu! who is this? Is she mad? Help!

Marianne!" — a bell was rung violently — "the young lady is ill; pick her up, and" — wheeling back her chair — "mind you do not let her come near me."

There was no need to pick me up. I was on my feet in an instant, crimson with surprise and shame.

"Is it a fever?" continued my god-mother, still wheeling back her chair, until it had reached the wall. "Is it contagious?" A scent-bottle was at her nose directly.

I stammered forth that I was quite well.

"Are you sure of it?" said she, eyeing me cautiously; "quite sure that you do not feel feverish? Are you subject to fits, or was it only a fall? Are you hurt? Oh! you need not show me. Marianne, see if the young lady is hurt."

I shortly answered that I was given to no fits, and had sustained no injury.

"Then bring us in the supper, Marianne, it will do us good; and you, my dear child, sit down opposite me on the other side of the fire-place that I may see you." So speaking my god-mother wheeled slowly back to her former place, keeping her eye on me all the time, and remaining at a prudent distance. I took the seat she pointed out, and being still astonished and confused, eyed her with a bewildered glance.

I had thought Marianne stout, but, compared to her mistress, she was a light and agile maiden. Mademoiselle Tournelle was the broadest lady I ever beheld; the horizontal line predominated throughout her whole person. I never saw anything so compact as herself and the arm-chair together: she fitted in the arm-chair, and the arm-chair fitted to her with mathematical ac-

curacy; I thought of a plump oyster in its shell, and wondered whether she ever got out of it.

After looking at me for some time, and becoming convinced of my harmlessness, my god-mother hoped in a husky voice that my fall had not hurt me. I explained that it was not exactly a fall had brought me at her feet.

"Oh!" she slowly said, "I thought it was; you see at my age people have done with kneeling, weeping, and sentiment: things which only tend to disturb the digestion."

I murmured an apology.

"Never mind. So you were not comfortable at home." I wished to explain, she would not allow me — "No details, my dear child, they are useless and distressing things: I can imagine. Take off your cloak and bonnet; here comes the supper."

Marianne entered, bearing a covered dish, from which a fricassée of hot rabbit sent forth a most savoury odour. My god-mother's little black eyes sparkled, her lips moved and moistened, she wheeled her chair to the table, smoothed down the table-cloth, opened and spread out her own immaculate napkin, and, with her eyes on the dish, she softly rubbed her fat white hands. She did not seem in any hurry: no, she waited for the happy moment in a sort of placid beatitude, that bespoke the serenity of her mind.

"So this is my god-mother!" thought I, watching her picking the choice bits out of the dish, with all the candour of genuine selfishness and gourmandise.

"Do you like hot fricassée of rabbit, my dear? You do. I am so glad. There is nothing more uncomfortable than want of sympathy. I was to have married

a gentleman, a good man certainly, but with whom I could never agree. He detested my fricassée, and I detested his pâté de foie: it ended by carrying him off, as I had always predicted."

After supper, which lasted for an hour, my god-mother, not seeming to think that I might be fatigued and need rest, asked me to read her to sleep with the newspaper: in two minutes she was in a comfortable doze, which lasted half an hour. At the end of that time she woke up quite refreshed, and rang the bell. Marianne entered, carrying a tray covered with delicacies, which she placed on a convenient little table at my god-mother's elbow; she next brought forward a very comfortable high-backed chair, then a soft cushion for the feet, and placing both opposite the fire, composedly seated herself near her mistress, with whom she began to discuss the menu of the next day's dinner.

"Potage au riz, Marianne, it is long since we had any."

"I have no objection to the potage; but you must have côtelettes au basilic for the second course."

"With a poularde à la bourgeoise," placidly suggested my god-mother.

"No, indeed," snappishly said the cook, "you shall have ducks en hochepot, and be glad to get them too."

My god-mother yielded the point with a sigh: she evidently requested the poularde. The third course was extremely stormy: the mistress insisted on partridges, the cook declared she should be satisfied with a poulet à la reine. Overpowered with fatigue, I fell asleep as they renewed the quarrel over the dessert.

I remained with my god-mother a whole year, during which I was oppressed with comfort, and loaded with good things. There was not a genuine angle in the whole house. Everything was softened down, cushioned, and rounded off, as if for the use of the most fragile being. The beds of painful softness were shrouded in by drowsy-looking curtains; the doors had thick coats of wadding on, and flew open before the slightest touch; there were thick blinds to keep out the light, and high screens to keep off the wind; the chairs were vast and deep, the cushions soft and easy. But what was this to our perpetual feeding? Breakfast at eight, *déjeuner à la fourchette* at eleven, *gôûter* at two, dinner at six, and supper at nine. At the end of a week I declared I could not possibly partake of more than three meals a day, and sank for ever in the esteem of my god-mother and her cook Marianne.

For all this she was one of the most good-natured of selfish gourmands, quite ready to do a kindness, if she were only put in the way. This indeed was an indispensable condition. I do not think she doted on me, and my romantic fancies of being the staff and comfort of her old age certainly vanished on nearer view; yet she liberally paid masters to attend me when I expressed a desire to continue my studies, and authorized me to open a subscription with the circulating library, as soon as I had hinted a wish for a higher sort of literature than that which was to be found in her cookery books. She even allowed me to read her to sleep of an evening with some romantic tale, provided it were not of a painful nature, and that all ended comfortably, for, as she wisely observed, "life,

whether in fiction or reality, should always be like a good dinner, and close with the dessert."

We were enjoying ourselves after this fashion on a quiet winter's evening, and my god-mother had just dropped off into her usual doze, when I heard a carriage stopping at the door. The bell was rung violently; Marianne opened, and in a few seconds entered the parlour.

"Madame," said she, with a bewildered look, "a lady — your sister, she says — wishes to see you."

I had never heard of my god-mother having more than one sister, who had died, or was said to have died, in America. I conjectured this was she or her ghost, and the horror-struck look of Mademoiselle Tournelle showed me she had come to the same conclusion. Before she could recover or even answer, the visitor entered. She was a tall, thin, pale-faced woman, clad in black from head to foot, with feathers in her bonnet, that waved like the plumes of a hearse, and a long black velvet cloak, not unlike a pall. Her slow, majestic pace completed her funeral appearance. She paused on the threshold, and exclaiming with a broken sob, "Where is she? where is my own darling sister?"

She opened her arms to receive my transported god-mother. But, apart the effort it would have been to rise so soon after dinner, Mademoiselle Tournelle was too much stupified to dream of doing aught save staring with a secret horror at her sister, who accordingly fell upon her bosom, and vowed with many a sob, "that since they had met again, death alone should part them; that she — my god-mother — need

not fear, for that her own Rosalie would never, never leave her."

I never saw so tearful and melancholy a being as this same Rosalie. She embraced her sister and wept; she drew away to look at her and wept, and when I thought she had fairly given it up, she hugged her again with another sob and a fresh burst of tears. My god-mother endured all with as much mental as physical helplessness: to protest or resist was as impracticable a feat as to leave her arm-chair and fly.

The mournful Rosalie, though still weeping abundantly, had enough self-possession left to go and dismiss the fiacre at the door, and haggle about the fare with the driver. When this important task — which ended in the utter discomfiture of the cabman — was over, she ordered Marianne to take in her luggage, and walked up-stairs herself, for the purpose of selecting the best of her sister's spare bed-rooms. My poor god-mother never moved once all the time. Alarmed at her mute despair, I sought to comfort her, but all she could or would say was that, "since Rosalie, instead of being dead — as she ought to have been — was alive and well, it must be she who was destined to leave this world." She closed her eyes and feebly shook her head when I endeavoured to remove this painful impression. I perceived at supper how deeply this idea had taken hold of her mind. We had a hot fricassée of rabbit, but scarcely had my god-mother tasted the first mouthful, when she laid down her fork, and giving me a mournful look, exclaimed:

"No mushroom!"

In her agitation, Marianne had — for the first time

— forgotten that important ingredient, and my god-mother took this as a clear warning that she was soon to be called away from the good things of this world, From that fatal day her appetite declined visibly. The ghostlike Rosalie — the mystery of whose reëpppearance was never cleared up — carried her off in six weeks. I should have thought half the time quite sufficient, but my god-mother had a strong constitution. For six weeks her breakfast was disturbed by the lamentations of Rosalie, who mourned to think that her darling sister's years would not permit them to be long together; at dinner she heard herself besought in pathetic accents "to be frugal — to remember that their dear father had died of apoplexy, and that their dearest mother was so dropsical!" When supper time came round, Rosalie wept over her and told her "she was fast breaking up." At the end of the six weeks my poor god-mother, fairly conquered, took to her bed and died.

I had not loved her very much, yet I grieved for her death. She had been kind in her way; besides, it is one of my weaknesses to get easily attached to the human faces around me. I moreover pitied my poor god-mother, and lamented her unhappy end. By her will, Mademoiselle Tournelle left her property to Marianne, "as a token of esteem for her high talents, and gratitude for her faithful services." A codicil gave me a dowry of ten thousand francs, of which the interest alone was at my disposal until I became of age. A second codicil bestowed "on the sister who had shortened her days — her forgiveness."

Rosalie was loud in her lament: "she had sacrificed herself to an ingrate, incapable of appreciating

her devotion." Then suddenly her wrath vented itself upon me, whom she called "a little intrigante," and on Marianne, whom she accused of having poisoned her poor dear sister with her abominable cookery in general, and a perfidious dish of mushrooms in particular. How Marianne rose in her wrath, and turned Rosalie out of doors, is a matter foreign to the history of my experiences.

CHAPTER III.

BEHOLD me, kind reader, in a diligence once more, but this time on my road to Paris. I am nearly eighteen; my dowry yields me the magnificent income of three hundred francs, but I shrewdly conclude that this is not quite enough to live upon, and therefore proceed to the capital, where a host of pupils are, of course, ready to avail themselves of my talents, — I have taken pains, and am really an accomplished young lady. I go to Paris for three reasons: the first, that which I have mentioned; the second, that I am determined to see the world; the third, that Paris is the present residence of my step-mother, under whose guardianship I in some sort consider myself, and with whom I have kept up a distant correspondence. She coldly approves my resolve of remaining in some respectable boarding-school until I can procure pupils, or a situation as governess; and informs me that Joséphine and Louise have married advantageously in Normandy, our native province; but why she herself stays in Paris she does not mention. She offers me no home with her, nor, to say the truth, do I desire one,

for my heart is still sore with the memory of old times.

My journey was uninteresting. Paris confused more than it dazzled me. The office of the diligence was not far from my step-mother's residence; I hired a fiacre, and was at her door within half an hour of my arrival. The house was mean, though clean; she lived on the fourth-floor in a small apartment, scantily furnished. This was strange for one of her elegant tastes and habits. She received me kindly, but coldly, as usual. We spoke of my god-mother.

"I wonder she did not leave you more than ten thousand francs," said Madame Delmare; "I thought she would adopt you."

"She was very kind," I replied; "I had no claim upon her, I have no claim on any one." My step-mother pressed her hand to her forehead; I thought she looked troubled. I hastened to speak of Joséphine and Louise.

"They are so happy," said the fond mother, with a sudden smile and a brightening look.

I understood all at once: she had given everything up to marry her plain daughters, and this thought could make the miserable little apartment a sunny and joyful place for her. But why was she not with either of them? why was she alone? I could not help putting the thought into words. She hastily replied "that it was her own choice, quite her own choice; she had always liked Paris." And she gave me an anxious look, as if she feared I might not believe her.

Why is it that, when I beheld her there alone and forsaken, hiding her poverty in the bosom of a great and strange city, the memory of every past kindness

rose so strong within me, that my whole heart yearned towards her? and I could not but speak:

"Maman," said I, for I had always named her thus, "it so happens that we are both alone in this strange place. Is there anything to prevent us from being together? I will be no burden to you. Indeed, I fancy we might be happier together."

At first she did not answer.

"My poor child," she said at length, "my health is not very good: you would have but a dull life with me."

"I should like it, I should like it dearly," I eagerly exclaimed. "Pray let it be so. You will love me a little for my father's sake, and I will love you a great deal, not for his sake only, but for your own sake, and for all the good you did to one who had none on earth save you."

I laid my hand upon her arm and looked up into her face, for indeed my heart was in what I said, and I felt very much moved.

"Sylvie," answered my step-mother, in a tremulous tone, "you are a good child, with a kind heart. God will bless you for all this." And drawing me towards her, she kissed me and wept.

The joy her consent gave me showed me how much I loved her in my heart. I never spent a happier day or more pleasant evening. The reserve she had always inspired me with vanished at once. I talked incessantly; firstly, because joy has the effect of making me voluble; and secondly, because it was so pleasant to hear my own voice calling her "maman."

"Maman, I shall have so many pupils," said I, arranging my books in the little drawing-room. "Ma-

man, I shall earn so much money," I observed at dinner — it was rather a frugal one. "I only fear, maman," said I in the evening, "that I shall scarcely have any time to be at home with you."

Maman smiled. She was sitting by the fireside, with something of mingled joy and sadness in her look as it rested upon me. I sat on a low stool at her feet, building my glorious castles in the air, with the zeal and faith of an architect of eighteen. They stood so clearly before me. That very day, within two hours of my arrival, I had taken my advertisement to be inserted in the *Petites Affiches*: "A young lady — well educated — good musician — English and Italian — terms moderate!" What parent or guardian could resist this appeal, and be so blind to the great rule of self-interest as not to secure my services at once?

"Maman," I continued, in my random talk, "you should always wear black silk, nothing becomes you so well. Why have you no flowers now? I know you are fond of them. Shall we not remove from here? As I was coming home from the newspaper office I saw a charming fourth-floor to let, with a large balcony, quite the thing for your flowers, and a handsome room that would do so well for me to have classes at home; for you see it would be a great deal more pleasant for the pupils to come to me — than for me to be running after them, in wind, rain, and every weather; besides the expense of taking omnibuses in order to be in time."

"My dear child," said maman, a little gravely, "you have not got the pupils yet."

"But they are coming," I confidently replied.

We took the apartment. I spent no little of my

ready money on furniture for the drawing-room, and especially on a large mahogany table, covered with green baize, which I destined for the "classes;" it was somewhat dear, but one pupil at ten francs a month would — as I proved to maman — cover the expense in eight months and a half. Upon the whole, I thought it cheap, and rejoiced over my bargain.

There was only one circumstance which mortified me: "the out-door pupils, whom it was so fatiguing to run after in wind, rain, and every weather," delayed making their appearance. I could not understand this. Had my advertisement appeared? It had. Were, then, the parents and guardians of Paris struck with moral blindness, that they so recklessly disregarded the advantages offered to them? I recapitulated inwardly. A young lady — well educated — good musician — English and Italian — terms moderate: And yet a whole fortnight had elapsed, and no answer had come.

"There is only one explanation possible," said I to maman; "some unprincipled governess has, by means as yet inexplicable to me — but I shall find it out — intercepted the answers of my unknown correspondents at the newspaper office — I shall have them sent here another time — and carried off my unhappy and deluded pupils. Nice teaching they will get from *her*! This is very tiresome, for I shall have to insert another advertisement. But after all," I consolingly added, "it is only a fortnight lost, for it stands to reason that I could not have accepted all the pupils."

Maman received this explanation with a doubtful look, but she was unwilling to discourage me.

A second advertisement was, therefore, sent, with the wise precautions I have mentioned. But when two

days had elapsed, and I received no reply, I could not help observing with some anxiety:

"I fear, maman, she has carried them all off. Of course they were all attracted by the first advertisement. Do you think it will be very long before I can find another supply?"

Maman's reply was more encouraging than definite; but I comforted myself with the "classes." I gloried, I may say I revelled, in the "classes." I beheld — in my mind's eye — the long table covered with ink-stands, books, and papers, and surrounded by attentive pupils, who hung upon my words. I — preserving that gravity which should never desert a teacher — seriously expound that which it is my object to teach, patiently listen to timid objections, and gently explain all difficulties away. At the end of every month I receive the moderate sum of ten francs from each pupil — it is fifteen if they remain an hour extra, see last paragraph but one of the prospectus. These ten francs all put together make a handsome pile of five-franc pieces, which I display to the astonished gaze of maman, and out of which I secretly buy her a rich black silk dress. Instead, however, of reproving me for my extravagance, she merely says:

"Sylvie, my dear, your pupils are not coming."

The dream vanishes at once, and I waken with a perturbed spirit, for if I get no pupils, what becomes of the "classes?" Fate, who then entered the apartment under the shape of our portress with a letter in her hand, spared me the trouble of a reply. I broke the seal with trembling fingers.

"A pupil! a dozen, for all I know," I joyously exclaimed; "Mademoiselle Benoît — an old aunt I will

warrant, with a legion of nieces — wants me; she lives close by; how delightful!”

It was not in maman's power to moderate my transports, and so with a smile and a sigh, and a recommendation to secure advantageous terms, which I answered with a shrewd look, she saw me depart on my blissful errand.

I was at the door of Mademoiselle Benoît in five minutes, but I walked up-stairs with a cool business-like air, lest the portress should by any means know my errand, and suspect this was my first pupil. Indeed, I was resolved to be greatly on my guard; and I decided inwardly that Mademoiselle Benoît must be very deep to over-reach me. I found her in furnished apartments on the second-floor, in her boudoir; her favourite room, she said; I cannot assert it was her only one, but it was the first I entered, and the only door I saw looked as if leading to a dark closet, by which I do not mean to imply that a whole suite of apartments did not extend beyond.

Mademoiselle Benoît was about forty, sallow and plain, but so juvenile in her attire, that I looked quite matronly by her side in my dress of sober brown. Half rising from the sofa on which she was reclining, she languidly inquired my errand. I explained. She looked incredulous. “Impossible!” she exclaimed. I nervously produced the letter. She eyed it like a person waking from a dream.

“Ah! I remember now,” she thoughtfully exclaimed; “I had forgotten all about it. You need not be astonished, it is just me.”

I supposed she had a bad memory: but she shook her head. “Memory — no, it was not that; but we

would not speak on this subject. She had seen my advertisement, and wished to know whether I would mind devoting a few hours to her daily, as secretary, reader, and companion." This was not what I had hoped for, but I was in no mood to refuse. The next thing I supposed would be the discussion about terms, and here I was ready for Mademoiselle Benoît; but without alluding to this subject she merely said:

"My nerves render this plan imperative. I must place myself and my too ardent feelings under the control of a calmer mind. Certain agitating books must be read slowly; certain deep emotions must be vented slowly. You understand."

I tried to look as if I did, but I was thinking of the terms. "Besides," she continued modestly, "unmarried — alone — without a male protector in this great city, where I am detained by a vexatious lawsuit — obliged to receive the visits of men of business, I really cannot dispense with the presence of a person of my own sex, to whom I shall look for advice and protection." I felt confounded at the idea of having to advise and protect a lady who might, without any stretch of fancy, have been my mamma. Heedless of this, she proposed that I should begin my office by reading Victor Hugo's last volume, and she had already assumed a listening attitude, when I faltered out something about terms. She looked infinitely shocked.

"Terms! money, mon Dieu! how could some people be so very worldly? She never thought of money."

I inwardly despised myself as a worshipper of mammon — well I might in the presence of such

high-mindedness. She pursued: "Since the odious subject has been mentioned, pray what are your terms? But mind, I know as much of such things as a baby."

Beautiful ignorance and charming confidence. With what agonizing nicety did I calculate the exact sum I might conscientiously ask. At length it came out: for three hours a day, fifty francs a month. "Fifty," she carelessly repeated, her mind on other things, her eyes on the ceiling; then suddenly turning them upon me, she added: "Don't you think you could come for forty?"

"I do not think I could," I replied, with some emotion.

"But any one would, I assure you," was her significant rejoinder.

This settled the matter. I perceived that in my ignorance I had asked a salary so high as to startle even this ingenuous lady. I was distressed, I apologized; I would have come for thirty francs if she had asked me.

"No apologies," she said, with a sigh; "I admire, I envy your worldly wisdom. Would I might acquire some of it. Vain hope! I, too heedless, too confiding, shall be imposed upon to the end. You, so acute, so penetrating — ah! I envy you. And now a few pages of Victor Hugo, if you please."

She once more assumed the listening attitude. When we had done with Victor Hugo we took up Lamartine: in short, we went the round of French poets in two hours. I occasionally besought Mademoiselle Benoît to explain various obscure and mysterious passages, with which she seemed particularly en-

raptured, but she only turned up her eyes, shook her head, and sighed. "I was happy not to understand such things; I should never seek to understand them; it was best to remain as I was. And now," she added, "will you be so good as to take a pen, a sheet of paper, and prepare to write?"

I complied, and listened with some curiosity, for I felt confident she was a muse, at the very least; but she only dictated the following letter:

"MY DEAR CICERO,

"Be not surprised at the strange handwriting. I have secured — a step you will approve — a companion, whose prudence and worldly wisdom will greatly benefit your poor heedless friend.

"I feel anxious about your health, not having seen you these two days. I need scarcely say that for the paltry law-suit I do not care. You know my foolish disinterestedness. My opponent, poor man, has set his heart on gaining his cause. Pray let him: I have a wealth in my thoughts, in my feelings, in my heart, he cannot touch. I would say come and dine with me to-morrow, did I not know your strict business habits; but you will perhaps call in the afternoon to let me know how the case is going on. In the artistic point of view I feel deeply interested in it."

Mademoiselle Benoît, having signed this letter, requested me to fold it up, but suddenly recollecting herself, she begged of me to open it again: "there was a little postscript to add."

I complied, and added the following P. S.

"By the merest chance — a letter from the country — I learned this morning that the grandfather of my opponent was a notorious gambler; that his eldest

son, the father of my opponent, failed; that his second son, the uncle of my opponent, was drowned in a very inexplicable sort of way; and that the first wife of my opponent died suddenly, she being then *alone* in the house with her husband.

"P. P. S. S. I mention these circumstances, thinking they may interest you."

The letter, now fairly finished, was directed to a Monsieur Everard, whom I conjectured to be her lawyer, and Mademoiselle Benoît asked me to post it as I was going home. I found maman uneasy at my long absence. Sitting down at her feet by the fire-side, I gave her a minute account of all that had passed. When I told her about the agreement she shook her head. But when I concluded, and looked up into her face somewhat anxiously, she only smiled kindly, and said, as she smoothed my hair, "I was a good child, and with a little more knowledge of the world I would do very well."

I felt relieved, for, to say the truth, reader, I had begun to fear that Mademoiselle Benoît had overreached me, and that I had not been quite successful with my first pupil.

Nothing worth mentioning occurred for three weeks, during which I found no other scholar. I comforted myself by thinking of the "classes." I had ceased to mention them, having a vague notion that maman, though unwilling to discourage me, was getting sceptical on this subject, and even looked on the green table with an eye of disfavour. I wrote — for Mademoiselle Benoît — almost daily epistles to Monsieur Everard, whom I never saw, but to whom — and this was really provoking — I had to describe myself as

"the grave adviser and prudent worldly friend" of my employer. She informed me at the end of the three weeks that her law-suit was over; a great point, and that she had won; a secondary point, of course. Monsieur Everard was to dine with her the next day; but unless I consented to be present, she could not think of dining alone even with a single man of his years and gravity. I yielded, and accordingly dressed a little, a very little, better than usual for the occasion. Monsieur Everard was already there when I arrived. He was a tall, stiff man, but he did not look more than thirty, though grave enough for double that age. He wore a pair of green spectacles, which gave him a sort of impenetrable look, and which I considered symbolical of the mysteries of the law. I thought he eyed me with some surprise; he had probably expected to find his client's "grave adviser" somewhat older. He soon resumed his conversation with our hostess: they were talking about the law-suit. She had already — charming obliviousness — forgotten all about the damages.

"It was very foolish; she knew it was; but now, positively, how much was it?"

"Fifteen thousand francs," shortly answered the lawyer.

"Oh! of course: how could I? And the costs you say —"

"Fall on your antagonist, who being nearly ruined —"

"Poor man," quickly interrupted Mademoiselle Benoît.

"Asks for time to settle his account."

"Impossible," she said, with a deep sigh; "I have

— you know my weakness — given my brother my solemn word of honour there shall be no delay; but pray let him know I pity him; pray do.”

“I believe he has not the money,” continued Monsieur Everard.

“How unprincipled!” cried Mademoiselle Benoît, colouring, “but I remember he has land.”

“Do you wish for a saisie?” coolly asked the lawyer.

“Oh! you cruel man, to hint at such a thing!”

“Then you object to a saisie?”

“Alas! why is it inevitable?”

“Mademoiselle Benoît, I am a plain man: do you or do you not wish for a saisie?”

She protested he was the most pitiless man in existence: that he put things into her head of which it grieved her to think; that since no other means remained, she must of course say “yes;” but that she begged him not to harrow her foolish feelings any longer with so distressing a subject. A peculiar smile curled Monsieur Everard’s nether lip, but he made no reply, and bowed coldly. Our charming hostess, anxious not to leave us under a painful impression, soon recovered her flow of spirits. She gaily taxed the lawyer with his gravity, and protested I was more sedate than ever.

“You have no idea,” said she, addressing him, “what a prudent, calculating head that is. How I am checked, subdued, and brought down to a sober mood, by this grave worldly little friend of mine. Oh! you can have no idea.”

“Indeed!” said he, with the same smile.

I coloured; and felt heartily ashamed of my world-

liness. Dinner was not ready yet, and Mademoiselle Benoît proposed a walk in the Tuileries; we acceded. She retired to the room that looked like a dark closet, and in a few minutes appeared in an elaborate toilette, that threw me quite in the shade.

The day was fine, the garden was thronged, and our walk seemed very pleasant. We had not proceeded far along the broad avenue of horse chestnuts, when we met two ladies and a gentleman. They gave us a peculiar look, and the gentleman observed in a low tone: "What a charming blonde." They passed on, and left me in a flutter. The green spectacles of Monsieur Everard, whose arm I held, were on me in a second, then as sharply turned towards Mademoiselle Benoît; her hair was dark. The compliment could not be for her, yet I wondered, and felt incredulous. Two ladies walking together had already passed us; they looked at my companions first, then at me, lingered behind, and one whispered to the other: "The blonde is lovely." What woman can doubt her beauty when it is praised by another woman? I confess I began to feel uncomfortable on this subject. Had I been handsome all along without knowing it? Novel heroines always were unconscious. Perhaps I was a heroine! I will not weary the reader by repeating all the exclamations of admiration which were bestowed on the lovely blonde during our hour's walk. I began to find that there was nothing so astonishing in all this; I had never been counted handsome in the province; but who did not know the discrimination of Parisian taste?

I was seated at dinner near Monsieur Everard, but neither the lawyer nor his green spectacles occupied

me much: I was thinking of the discovery I had made.

"I congratulate you on your triumph, Mademoiselle," he observed, after the soup.

I blushed, and thought he might have spared my modesty.

"What triumph?" asked our hostess.

"I should have said the triumph of your taste. Did you not hear every one admiring the blonde on your bonnet?"

"Oh! it was the blonde then," I cried quite bewildered. The green spectacles were upon me directly. I became crimson. He said nothing, but smiled so significantly that I felt I hated him.

"Yes," sighed Mademoiselle Benoît, "I have been very extravagant; my prudent friend there would never forgive me if she knew how much that blonde cost."

Monsieur Everard gave me another look, but he had mercy enough to remain silent.

I went home vexed with the keen-sighted lawyer, vexed with myself and my own foolish vanity. Had I not eyes to see the blonde on Mademoiselle Benoît's bonnet?

I was so mortified that I did not notice maman's smiling and amused face; but she noticed my downcast look and questioned me. I told her what had happened; she laughed and bade me not mind Monsieur Everard or Mademoiselle Benoît.

"You have found other friends," she said. "What do you think of Mademoiselle finding you a husband?"

My breath seemed gone at this strange suggestion.

"Yes," pursued maman, "Mademoiselle declares that she has found you a husband."

I have not yet mentioned Mademoiselle. Her name was Leonie Moreau, I believe, but I am not sure. No one had ever dreamed of calling her otherwise than Mademoiselle. She was fifty, brown as a berry, stout, and brisk as a bee, and she was Mademoiselle for every one in the house in which she had lived for the last thirty-three years. The door of our apartment faced hers: we met her often on the staircase, and saw a good deal of her on her balcony, which was a continuation of ours. Maman had a distant acquaintance with some of Mademoiselle's relatives. Thus our knowledge of her began, and as Mademoiselle had a warm heart and a lively tongue, our friendship progressed rapidly; to me she took an especial fancy. She found me strikingly like a young sister of hers, who had died some thirty years before, and she liked me for the resemblance more, I believe, than for my own particular merits. She never saw me watering flowers on the balcony without a tear in her eye, that did not check the pleasant and habitual smile on her lips, or the cheerful "Good morning" with which she always greeted me. In my "classes" and attempts to procure pupils she entered warmly, and did her best, I am sure, to second me, but uselessly; and it probably was her failure in that quarter that had suggested to her the propriety of finding me a husband. How she meant to set about this strange task, and what sort of husband it was to be, maman could not or would not tell me.

"Go on the balcony and water your flowers," she said, "Mademoiselle will be there, and she will tell you all about it."

At first I said I would not go; then curiosity proved stronger than pride: I filled my watering-pot and I stepped out. A brown face immediately appeared between two tall laurel trees standing in pots, and a beaming smile welcomed me.

"What a lovely evening, Mademoiselle Sylvie," said the gay voice of Mademoiselle.

A rosy flush spread above the opposite roof, and faded away into the heavenly blue at the zenith. It was a fine evening, and I said so whilst I watered a rose tree. Mademoiselle's head stretched out as far as it could go, and she confidentially whispered:

"I wish you would draw a little nearer, my dear."

I obeyed in some confusion, and she half said, half whispered:

"I cannot speak loud on account of that odious little thing down-stairs. I am confident she listens; else how could things that I have not mentioned to more than half a dozen trustworthy people get wind? It looks suspicious."

I confessed it did.

"Well, then, my dear, let us speak low. I mentioned to your maman this afternoon a little scheme of my own. I want you to marry a young cousin of mine. Of course you must know more about it before you reply. Well, then, here is an exact and most accurate description of my cousin. He is twenty-eight, tall, dark-haired, and blue-eyed: so he will just suit you, who are rather short and fair. He has handsome features, and a most pleasant countenance. So much

for his person: his temper is angelic, sweet, and most amiable. His means are not great as yet; but he makes money enough, and requires but a small dot. Your ten thousand francs will do. He is to spend the evening with me after to-morrow, and you will just drop in by chance. He will know you by your dress, which I shall describe — not a word! — *he* will not know that *you* know anything about it: so please to look as cool and as careless as possible. I mention the circumstance of the dress because some other girl might call, and though he knows almost all the young ladies with whom I am acquainted, yet there might be a stray one, and a mistake might occur. What will you wear; white muslin or blue? you look well in both."

I had a vision of a fastidious young Sultan, handsome and scornful, sitting on Mademoiselle's drawing-room sofa, and thence surveying, through his critical eye-glass, a series of fair or dark girls passing before him with their most fascinating looks, and I firmly resolved that one of these I should not be. But Mademoiselle was a wilful little woman. I therefore merely said that I was very much obliged to her, and that I should think over her kind proposal. She looked at me doubtfully.

"You are not committed in the least," she said; "I have told him nothing, save that you are a good daughter, a charming girl, and that you have ten thousand francs. He does not even know your name, nor where you live, nor the colour of your hair. So you see, Mignonne, I could not do things more delicately."

I repeated that I was very much obliged to her, and succeeded in changing the subject of discourse,

When I went in, I told maman all that had passed, and protested I would not go and be looked at.

"You are wrong, my dear," said my stepmother, "Mademoiselle's cousin is an employé; I believe, in a worldly point of view, it would be a good match. Besides, what do you risk or lose by going? Mademoiselle has managed everything so well that you are not in the least committed. You will be looked at by a man who does not even know your name. Where is the harm? Besides, is it not so that marriages are managed? You must not be romantic, my love."

In short, I was talked and reasoned into compliance.

But when the evening came my heart again failed me, and I begged of maman not to insist on my meeting that Monsieur Renaud, such I understood to be his name, as I really did not feel equal to the effort. She shook her head, and said that youth would be romantic, but she did not insist, and accordingly sent in a few words of apology to Mademoiselle.

CHAPTER IV.

I FELT rather amused at the idea of Monsieur Renaud's disappointment, and a little curious to know how he had spent his evening. Accordingly, I went out on the balcony early the next morning, and had scarcely stepped out when Mademoiselle's window flew open, and Mademoiselle herself, heedless of curl papers and night-cap, appeared with as much wrath on her brown face as could ever find room there.

"Oh! you naughty thing," she said, "if you only

knew the mischief you have done! But I must be fair; you never could imagine it; no one could: it is that odious little thing down-stairs! Monsieur Renaud came as agreed. I recapitulated all your good qualities. I *will* say it to vex you. I told him you were discreet, prudent, without a particle of vanity, and that you were to wear a blue dress. Well, he sat waiting, burning with impatience, for he is a very ardent young man, when who should walk in but Eugénie and her mother, and what should Eugénie wear but a blue dress! I made signs to him that she was not the right one, and concluded all was right; but, my dear, I was so provoked. It must have been the horrid little thing down-stairs that let that bold little flirt and her designing mother know there was a future husband then with me! How they behaved I will not tell you: it was disgraceful! Eugénie made love to my cousin before my very eyes! If you had only come in; well — well — I have not had many such evenings. At length they left, and before I could open my lips, out flew my cousin: 'What a charming, artless girl! I declare I am quite smitten!' 'It was not the right one!' I screamed. 'This is a bold, forward little flirt. I tell you it was not the right one. *She* could not, or rather would not, come.' 'Well, then, let her stay,' he replies, 'I am quite satisfied with the one I have seen.' I declare I cried with vexation; but he only laughed, and if he marries that little coquette, I shall lay it all to you."

I was half amused and half annoyed at this account. I did not care about Monsieur Renaud; but I had wanted him to be disappointed, to be shown that girls were not at his bidding; not to be courted by a

Mademoiselle Eugénie, and to fall in love with her forthwith. However, what was done was done, and I had no right to complain if another had prevailed where I had not attempted to succeed. I was sorry to perceive, however, that maman was quite vexed. "You will never get on in the world, my dear," she said, a little sharply, and then she chid herself for this little burst of temper, and kissing me, said I was a good child for all that.

My lesson that day proved particularly disagreeable. Mademoiselle Benoît could not hold her peace on my worldly-mindedness and my prudence; and Monsieur Everard, who was present, could not help dropping hints that provoked me beyond all patience. It appeared from his speech that artless, unassuming modesty was the charm of woman in his eyes. With a sigh Mademoiselle Benoît asked what woman was without that? And so they went on echoing each other, until I had a great mind to get up and walk out. I did not, for several very excellent reasons; but I came home in no very pleasant mood. I went out on the balcony, certainly in no hopes of meeting Mademoiselle, but there she was however, bright and beaming as usual.

"My dear," she said, "I have such news for you. You know what I told you about my cousin, and how smitten he was with Mademoiselle Eugénie's artlessness —"

"Indeed, Mademoiselle," I interrupted, feeling vexed at hearing so much on that subject in one day, "indeed I do not care about Monsieur Renaud or Mademoiselle. I am delighted they are mutually

pleased; but I really wish to hear no more about them."

Mademoiselle looked at me with some surprise.

"My dear," she said, "how warmly you speak. I meant no harm, and, moreover, it is all right. My cousin called this morning to beg to see the right one, and to assure me that when he professed himself so pleased with Mademoiselle Eugénie, he was only joking — he has a vast deal of humour. In short, he is to come and dine with me this evening, and you must come too."

Madame supported this suggestion so strongly, that I was obliged to yield. It was nearly dinner time, and I had barely half an hour for my toilette. I said anything would do, but maman, who was unusually fastidious, seemed to think that nothing could do. At length we were both ready, and with some trepidation on my part, we crossed the landing, and rang at Mademoiselle's door. Mademoiselle's blooming Norman servant-girl opened to us with a smile, and ushered us in. Mademoiselle herself, in the splendour of a pink cap and a brown silk dress, rushed forward to meet us, and clasped us both in her arms. She seemed very much excited, and almost beside herself.

"My dears," she exclaimed, in an under tone, "I am so glad. My cousin is burning with impatience. He is a very ardent young man. I am sure he is quite in a fever of expectation. I know I was. Pray walk in to the drawing-room."

If I had not felt pretty certain that the fever was all of Mademoiselle's feeling or imagination, this speech of hers would have made me very uncomfortable, but the ardour of a man who searched for a wife in the

methodical fashion adopted by Mademoiselle's cousin seemed to me very doubtful, so doubtful, indeed, that there was scarce a flush in my cheek when I followed maman into the drawing-room. A gentleman, who sat looking over a book of engravings, rose as we entered. He looked at me, and I looked at him. I saw Monsieur Everard.

"My cousin, Monsieur Everard Renaud," said Mademoiselle; "Madame Delmare, her daughter, Mademoiselle Sylvie Delmare."

I certainly do not know what sort of a feeling sinking in the ground produces in the person so sunk, but it seemed to me then that to sink through the polished oak floor on which I stood, and vanish no matter where, would have been pleasanter than to face Monsieur Everard. True, he behaved decorously and well; looked grave and unconscious, but could I forget what we had met for, and could he? Impossible, we both knew it: it was dreadful. But from the very misery of the position came a sort of relief. I felt convinced that the quiet, prudent Monsieur Everard, so strangely described as an ardent and enthusiastic young man, would never bestow a second thought on the girl of whose credulity and vanity he had obtained such recent proofs. This quite set me at my ease. Monsieur Everard was no one, and I spoke and acted under this feeling. The dinner went off very well; the evening was pleasant. M. Everard made himself agreeable, Mademoiselle was in ecstasies, and maman very well pleased.

"My dear," said she, when we retired, "I like that Monsieur Renaud. He is sensible: he is a man of the

world, and if you could marry him, or one like him, I should be well pleased."

I laughed. "Dear maman," I said, "Monsieur Renaud and Monsieur Everard are one. So just fancy what a chance I have of either."

Maman was at first taken aback, then she said she did not see that. I interrupted her to declare with some warmth, that though I was sure Monsieur Everard would not have me, yet even if he would, nothing should make me have so hard and disagreeable a man. Maman sighed, and feared I was romantic, but did not insist.

The next day I went to my lesson as usual; Mademoiselle Benoît was with her lawyer, and the said lawyer chose to be very impertinent, as I thought. He said nothing that I could quarrel with, but his looks and smiles, when Mademoiselle Benoît descanted, as usual, on my merits and the advantage I was to her were more than I could endure. I felt injured, and went home in such bad humour that it was some time before I perceived maman's pale face, that still bore the trace of recent tears. At length I was struck with both, and going up hastily to her, I asked what had happened.

"A great misfortune, my dear child," she replied, in a tremulous tone.

"What is it, maman?"

"The agent de change, to whom I had confided my rentes to dispose of, has absconded to Belgium."

This was indeed a woeful blow, but I comforted maman as well as I could. I besought her not to leave me for either of her daughters, who did not want her as I did; then I said it would only be re-

moving to a cheaper apartment and living a little more frugally; that I would get scholars yet, and "classes" too, and that all would be comfortable. She refused for a long time, saying she had no claim upon me — which I warmly denied — but she ended by yielding. Dear maman! her heart was sore indeed, but she did not wish me to think her own children would be loath to receive her, and I felt as anxious not to let her see I knew the bitter truth.

"And now, maman," said I, "just let me write down the name of that agent de change. Who knows but Monsieur Everard may give us some good advice!"

She sighed and shook her head as she uttered the name: "Monsieur Durand of Hâvre."

The pen dropped from my fingers. Oh! it was too much, too much indeed. I felt it, and fairly burst into tears.

"Sylvie; my dear child! was is the matter?" cried maman.

"Alas!" I exclaimed, weeping still, "it is that same Monsieur Durand who has got my money."

We passed a weary evening, endeavouring to comfort each other, but feeling sad indeed. Maman was more distressed for me than for herself. Every time her eyes fell upon me they filled with tears. I knew why. The home which would receive her would be closed upon me. She felt it keenly.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, in a tone of deep sorrow, "what would your poor father say?"

"That you acted for the best," I replied, kissing her.

CHAPTER V.

I FEAR my eyes were still red when I called the following day on Mademoiselle Benoît. She was engaged in the uncongenial task of receiving a large sum of money, which her lawyer methodically counted over to her. He bowed and smiled — much I cared about his smiling! — but she never raised her eyes from the table: it was full five minutes before they had done.

“There, take it away,” she then contemptuously exclaimed, addressing some imaginary worshipper of mammon. But no one appearing, she rose with a sigh and removed the treasure to the neighbouring room, whence we heard various sounds of unlocking and locking up again. I thought to take this moment to address Monsieur Everard, whom, for many reasons, I wished to acquaint with what had happened; but he seemed so entirely absorbed by his law papers, and as he turned them over his countenance looked so severe, that my heart failed me.

“Mademoiselle,” said he, suddenly glancing up and catching my look before I had time to withdraw it, “do you feel unwell?”

I told him my little story in a low tone. He looked concerned, and took both the name of the agent de change and our address; “it way very unfortunate indeed;” and his accent was more kind and compassionate than I could have expected from him. Made-

moiselle Benoît, who had done locking up, had no such weakness.

"What!" she exclaimed, with a noble disdain of riches, "the loss of the vile metal called gold can affect you thus? Oh! the worldliness of this world!"

She continued to comfort me by dwelling so forcibly on the charms of poverty and the miseries of the rich, that I would have concluded the agent de change was a humane and benevolent philanthropist, bent on relieving me and my fellow-victims from the intolerable burden of money, if the worldliness which was so strong within me had not absolutely revolted against any such conclusion.

As I was leaving her, Mademoiselle Benoît handed me the sum of forty francs. Our "lessons," as she was pleased to term them, were over with the law-suit, and she was returning to her native province. She warmly thanked me for the excellent advice I had given her, and the judicious control I had exercised over her feelings. "But, my dear friend," said she, as we parted, "pray do not be so worldly; it dries up the heart."

Thus ended my brief connexion with my first pupil. I advertised again, but, alas! in vain.

Though I drew up a prospectus of my intended "classes," I grieve to say that the public were so injudicious as not to be captivated with my scheme. The classes, in short, proved a failure, and the green table which filled all our drawing-room being pronounced a perfect bore, was on the point of being sold to a broker, when Monsieur Everard, learning our intention, purchased it. This leads me to observe that the lawyer called upon us almost every day, to tell us that the

run-away agent de change had been heard of, or would be heard of soon, or had not been heard of at all. This did not mend the matter much, but maman was greatly touched with his disinterested zeal, and declared to me she had never met so kind and obliging a man. It vexed her to perceive that he did not stand very high in my favour; but, to be candid, the little he did say to me was always of an annoying and provoking nature; for after appealing, on one point or another, to my prudence and worldly wisdom, with so much gravity that I could not but think him in earnest, and candidly gave him my opinion, he would suddenly turn round, and looking at me from under his green spectacles, say with his own peculiar smile:

“And so, Mademoiselle Sylvie, you thought you were the blonde” — he did not add the epithet “lovely,” but I knew he thought it — “ah! well, to see how the wisest of us can be deceived!”

The reader must not imagine that, because pupils did not come and “classes” would not answer, I remained idle. No; we had been so fortunate as to procure some embroidery from a large shop, and we worked from morning till night to eke out a scanty subsistence. I was grieved to see maman thus reduced; for my part, I was young, full of hope, and did not mind it. Never, indeed, had I been so happy. What were the comforts of my early home, when maman’s heart was estranged from me? What was the good living of my poor god-mother’s house compared to the pleasures of this humble home, where I loved and was loved? For maman loved me now: I saw it every day in her kindly look, and heard it in her gentle voice.

I had come home one evening with some work, when I found Monsieur Everard in earnest conversation with maman.

"Mademoiselle Sylvie," said he, "I have news for you."

"Indeed," I shortly replied, for he had teased me about the blonde that same morning.

"Yes, the agent de change was arrested this morning, having been fool enough to come back to Paris. I am happy to say Madame Delmare's rentes were all found upon him."

"I clapped my hands and kissed maman. "There," I cried joyously, taking her work from her, "let me never see you at this again."

"Be quiet," said she, smiling, "you have not heard all Monsieur Everard has to say."

"Oh! I know," I shrewdly observed, "my ten thousand francs are found too."

"Wisely inferred," said he, with a smile, "but, alas, I grieve to say your ten thousand francs are gone, quite gone;" and he spoke as if he felt glad of it.

I felt disappointed, but I soon rallied. "Well," said I, resolutely, "I can work; cannot I, maman?"

"Yes, my dear, but you have not yet heard Monsieur Everard."

I looked at him with some surprise. He did not speak, but fidgetted on his chair, coughed, rose, took a turn across the room, then came back, still silent, to his seat. I looked at maman: she was endeavouring to repress a smile.

"Mademoiselle," said he, whilst a faint tinge of colour rose to his cheek, "I was explaining to Madame

Delmare, when you entered, a wish I have for some time entertained, and which has obtained her approbation. I am a man of few words; forgive me if, without further preparation, I simply ask: Will you become my wife?"

He looked at me; I remained mute. I felt astonished, and not triumphant, reader, but very much touched. I was neither rich nor handsome; Monsieur Everard was no heedless romantic man: I felt it was not common affection and esteem had urged him to this offer.

"Sylvie," anxiously said maman, "why do you not answer?"

Monsieur Everard said nothing, but looked at me with evident uneasiness. I had remained silent, not because I knew not what I felt, but because I knew not how to say it; I did not say it even then, but simply held out my hand to him. He took it, and with more gallantry than I could have expected from him, raised it to his lips. I turned my head away that he might not see my eyes filling with tears; Maman was suddenly seized with a cold in her head; even Monsieur Everard did not quite succeed in preserving a business-like composure; but we all three felt happy, and soon recovered, each keeping up the pretence of not feeling a bit concerned.

He remained to dinner. He looked a little awkward: I believe that in his heart he feared I would retaliate for the past; but my only attempt in this way was to ask for the green spectacles to be removed. They vanished at my bidding, and allowed me to perceive that the eyes they shaded had nothing amiss; but

the whole countenance looked strange without them; I felt it thus, and before ten minutes had elapsed I said:

"Pray put on your spectacles again."

He smiled and obeyed. Our courtship was brief; it was his wish; it was maman's wish; what could I do but yield up the point quietly?

I have now been married ten years. I will give the reader no account of my married experiences, but simply describe to him the picture I behold as I write. It is winter: my husband is sitting by the fire-side, talking to Joseph, our eldest child. In her easy chair, on the other side of the fire-place, sits my dear maman; ay, mine, though no drop of the same blood flows in our veins. A child is on her knee, a little brunette, whose dark hair she smooths from her forehead with a gentle touch and a wistful glance; but, reader, that child is not mine; it is all that remains of her poor daughter Louise, who died a year ago, the broken-hearted widow of a ruined man. Joséphine offered to bring up the orphan with her own children, but maman jealously refused. She went for her little Louise, brought her home, never allows a hand save her own or mine to touch her, and is always tracing in her features a likeness no one save herself can see; for Louise, though dark, is truly pretty.

My child is that little blonde who now endeavours to attract her grandmamma's attention; and see how maman hastens to make room for her by the side of Louise, and tries to look as if one were not dearer than the other. But children are restless: Joseph leaves his father, and Louise immediately jumps down to join him in a game. Henriette, happy in the exclusive possession of her grandmamma, remains nestling with

her. But though maman encircles her caressingly, her thoughtful look still follows Louise. She smiles at her joyous spirits, at the patronizing tone of Joseph, at the affection of the two children, and she makes for the future, plans which I read with a smile. She is already fidgetting herself to know whether Louise will be rich enough for Joseph; she is projecting impossible savings out of her narrow income, in order to treasure her up a dowry. Dear maman, were it not premature to speak of such a thing, — Joseph is eight and Louise five, — I might tell you that the point is already settled between myself and my husband. Should they be willing, a little money shall neither prevent the happiness of two loving hearts nor the fulfilment of your cherished dream: that the child of your child may become more closely linked to her on whom you have so long bestowed the name, and who truly feels for you the love of a daughter.

THE END.

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